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**Dispersions: Black Communities and Urban Segregation
in Porto Alegre, Brazil**

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**Dispersions: Black Communities and Urban Segregation
in Porto Alegre, Brazil**

by

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Dedicated to

the memory of Mãe Laudelina do Bará (1914-1997), who was born and raised,
and laid to rest in the former Colônia Africana in Porto Alegre, and actively made
that neighborhood more gracious while praising our Orixás
with her African drums.

Dedicado à

Memória de Mãe Laudelina do Bará (1914-1997), que nasceu, viveu e morreu na
antiga Colônia Africana em Porto Alegre e ativamente fez aquele bairro mais
gracioso enquanto honrava nossos Orixás com seus tambores africanos.

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**Dispersions: Black Communities and Urban Segregation
in Porto Alegre, Brazil**

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Jacqueline Britto Pólvara, Ph.D.

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Supervisor: João H. Costa Vargas

In Porto Alegre, Brazil, at the entrance of the city, the Workers Party (PT) implemented a re-urbanization project called the Entry of the City. This project included an investment in urban infra-structure and formalization of “informal” spaces where 3200 poor families live, most of them Black and Afro-descendent people. These families were removed from their original places and were settled in housing projects in the same neighborhood. This dissertation is a study of the historical processes of inclusion and exclusion, and removal and resettlement of Black families in Brazilian urban spaces. I use Porto Alegre both to discuss

general trends of racial politics in Brazilian urban spaces and to discuss how poor and Black people are continuously involved in historical processes of racialization promoted by the Brazilian society. Based on ethnographic research conducted in the Entry of the City, this dissertation analyzes different levels of racialization of Black people and their spaces, as well as different levels of segregation within segregated areas. This dissertation is divided in four sections in which I demonstrate: a) the history of urbanization of Porto Alegre and the genesis of the formation of this space as a process of removal and dispersion of Black families; b) the contemporary processes of this history that disperse and segregate Black people; c) how everyday life of the Entry of the City reinforces the processes of segregation of Black people despite the generalized poverty that affects the residents of that area; and d) how common senses about Black families and other poor people are expressed in the local newspaper and contribute to racialize Black people as well as poor neighborhoods. This dissertation presents three main arguments: first, I argue that race **is** an independent category that must be used to analyze urban segregation in Brazil. Second, Porto Alegre displays a disperse segregation instead of configuring ghettos in its space. Third, the exclusion and segregation of Black families within segregated areas is because of and constitutive of the dynamics of the racialization processes of Black families that are present in Brazilian urban spaces.

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Chapter 1: Introducing the work: *The space of Black People in Porto Alegre*

*“Países como o nosso jamais conheceram a figura do cidadão. O que se chama por este nome é um arremedo de cidadão. No Brasil, ... as classes médias sempre desejaram reter privilégios – e o privilégio é inimigo da cidadania – enquanto os pobres e todas as minorias jamais tiveram direitos. De tal forma que a expansão da classe média no Brasil acabou por ser uma condição para que a cidadania não se estabelecesse”. Milton Santos**

In the 1990s, while doing my research for my master’s degree in Porto Alegre, I became familiar with a quiet wealthy neighborhood called Mont Serrat, where my godmother in the *Batuque*, one of the Afro-Brazilian religions in South Brazil, used to live¹. In the beginning I was surprised that she not only lived there but also owned her house. After I became closer to her and others I was related to through religious kinship, I learned that Mont Serrat was only one neighborhood in Porto Alegre that used to be inhabited by Black families. In fact, in the late 1800s and the early 1900s, the neighborhood where I lived – not too far from the Mont Serrat - was also a Black neighborhood. I started to incorporate both *bairros* as part of the historic *Colônia Africana* [*African Colony*]. The house of my godmother, like any other *Batuque* house, was always crowded with her religious

* “Countries like ours have never known what a citizen is supposed to be. Instead we call such a person a forged citizen. In Brazil, ... middle-classes have always kept their privileges – and privilege is the enemy of citizenship – while the poor and all minorities have never had rights. The expansion of the middle-class became a condition to never allow citizenship to be established.” Milton Santos (2000: 10).

¹ Based on the Yoruba traditions, the Afro-Brazilian religions have godparents. Oloye Aina Olomo, herself a “Godmother”, defines this religious kinship as: “Godparent-to-godchild is a teacher-to-student and spiritual elder-to-junior relationship. A godparent is initiated to a divinity and it is the initiation rites the ceremonial links that connect people to specific spiritual lineage.” (personal communication).

sons and daughters, most of African-descent, and I heard stories from them about either their parents or a close relative that used to live in Mont Serrat. What I considered to be quite a fancy and expensive neighborhood ended up being part of the (then invisible) history of Black people in Porto Alegre, as are other locations that I already knew.

From my religious siblings I learned about their childhood stories, how they had grown up playing around the streets and parks of the neighborhood with other Black kids, and also, how they ended up moving out, most of them now concentrated either in peripheral areas or even in other cities in Porto Alegre's metropolitan areas. As I started this work, I would again hear similar stories about Black families in the city. As Mãe Lina do Bará, my godmother at that time in her late 70s, and I walked around the neighborhood, she would point to the houses and tell me about this or that family, remembering her childhood, adolescence, and adult years with her neighbors, many of them now either passed or gone from the neighborhood. She would also refer to different *Batuque* houses, or temples that previously existed and had to move out. A few old families still remain and the Black presence in the neighborhood and their modest wood houses contrast with the new BMWs and fancy gated communities. The ones who left did so because they could not afford the taxes in the area, which became too expensive for them. More interesting for me were those white middle- and upper-class neighbors who would complain about the rituals and the drum beats played during the ceremonies. The whitening process of that neighborhood brought together these forms of silencing Black identities. Today, I wonder if white people

consider they have “more rights”, based on the amount of money they paid for those apartments and houses, to the point of complaining about their Black neighbors.

After my godmother passed away, because of my emotional ties with her and that part of the neighborhood I did not return often. However, Mont Serrat became another case of the displacement of Black families in the city. Later, I met another godmother in the *Batuque*, Mãe Dorsa, through another anthropologist and friend who is affiliated with her religious family. My friend is an activist with the Black movement in the city and, being her god-son and anthropologist, he was working with Mãe Dorsa and her neighborhood, which were being removed into another area by the first administration of the PT². This was the first time that I followed the resistance movement against a removal process and, more remarkable to me was the fact that this movement was against the PT (the Workers Party). The first administration of the PT in Porto Alegre was arguing that the area (*vila Mirim*) was under risk and those families had to be removed not only because of the risk offered to them but also because the city ordinance had determined that that area – which was among those that they considered to be

² The PT (Workers Party) was born from the unions’ and social movements in the 1980s, still during the military dictatorship. It was considered the most – if not the only – leftist party in Brazil. In 2003 Lula, the leader and probably the most expressive figure of the unions’ movements in the 80s was elected for the presidential office. After Lula, part of the Brazilian public opinion influenced by the corporate media turned and the PT has been criticized and said to be losing its leftist appeal to become a more “liberal” party. Right now, while I write this, Lula is running for his second mandate against the candidate that represents the previous (neo-liberal) government. The poles show that the poorest population (or C and D classes) is voting for Lula, while the richest (A and B) prefer the other candidate.

“irregular” – it was necessary the continuation of an avenue that informally ended at the entrance of the *vila*.

Here in the *vila Mirim*, the removal process was being implemented not by taxation but by forced negotiation. *Mãe Dorsa*, her and her religious family’s *orixás*, her biological family, as well as the other neighbors, were not given much choice but to move into another area quite distant from their original homes. My activist friend had asked me to help these families – at that time represented by the *Associação de Moradores da vila Mirim* [Neighborhood Association of *vila Mirim*] and led by Vera, *Mãe Dorsa*’s biological daughter -- by going to the meetings with the representatives of the city hall, writing letters, and helping them take notes of their own meetings. What I saw there was a clear combination of different levels of discrimination: racism, stereotyping processes, veiled forced removal, and more than anything, in the end of the line, white people benefiting from the changes being implemented. For me, the saddest part was that everything that I was seeing was being made by the PT which was hard for me to believe.

This dissertation is, in a broad perspective, a study of these historical processes of inclusion and exclusion, removal and resettlement of Black families in Brazilian urban spaces, departing from the case of Porto Alegre. I use Porto Alegre both to discuss its particularity in Brazil in terms of racial politics and to discuss general trends of these politics that I believe are part of Brazilian development in its urban spaces. By Porto Alegre’s singularity, I identify two elements: first, the particular history of the State of Rio Grande do Sul that includes two different waves of European immigration which allowed the State to

pride itself for being “European”, meaning Italian and German, in contrast to the other parts of Brazil where the population is visibly made up of more indigenous and Black descendants. Although I do consider this history partially a whitening myth that encompasses not only the history of South Brazil but also the ideologies and the identities that are performed in the state, there is also the reality of this myth expressed in the results of the Census Bureau (IBGE) that classified the state as the second whitest-state in Brazil. Second, for sixteen years – four terms - Porto Alegre was administered by the leftist Workers Party, the PT (1989-2004), and this marked the history of the city both in national and in international scenarios as a place where the leftist utopia resisted to the new governance trends and implemented a popular and democratic politics. It is within these two historical processes that I situate Porto Alegre’s particularity.

Using a re-urbanization project called The Entry of the City Program (EC), I investigate the tensions, expectations, and fluidities in the relationships between Afro-Brazilian families, the city hall and its representatives, and the neighbors involved in this project. My aim is to identify – through these elements – implicit and explicit processes that contribute and/or reinforce racialization of people and their spaces. The Entry of the City Program is a bigger investment in urban infra-structure and “formalization” of the informal urban spaces in that area, which also involves a housing project. It affects 3200 families, most of them Blacks and Afro-descendent people, who work in the informal sector of recycling. The majority of these families’ jobs consist of driving pull carts throughout the streets of the city, picking up wasted papers and cardboards, aluminum cans,

glasses, and other recyclable materials. I analyze different levels of ethnographic data to identify the ways that racialization of people and their spaces occurs in Porto Alegre.

PORTO ALEGRE AND THE GLOBAL SCENARIO

I see Porto Alegre as a historical global place that has in its background a history of participating in many different global levels of activities. The city was born within this international scenario, since in the 18th Century it was located in a territorial dispute between Spanish and Portuguese domains and in the modern days it is geographically located in the middle of what is Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. Today, Porto Alegre is a place for the circulation of international capital represented by international businesses like Dell Computers, General Motors, and IBM, in addition to other associates that contribute to the CEITEC (Center of Excellency in Advanced Electronic Technology), a partnership between local universities and multinational electronic corporations. These international capital representatives only accentuate Porto Alegre's original place as an international city, as well as intensify its economic role in both national and international scenarios.

In order to honor and fit into this global order, the PT's administration faced challenges and incorporated answers to them into its four administrations. Porto Alegre, because of the PT's politics in the city, became an obligatory place for contemporary leftist political events. Four times (2001, 2002, 2003 and 2005) the city was the hostess-city for the World Social Forum (WSF), which further situated this city in the global – and leftist - scenario. The WSF had a big impact

in the city's national and international image, but more importantly, like other cities that prepare for international events (Barcelona for the Olympic Games in 1992 for example), Porto Alegre started to set up a spatial infra-structure to incorporate into a permanent place for the Forum. Unfortunately for the city, Porto Alegre did not become the permanent site of the WSF because, in 2003, the Forum's international council decided to host the event in different places, "in order to promote the internationalization" of the event³. Additionally, the fact that the PT lost the last elections (2004) to another more conservative party, the WSF's council decided that the city did not represent a "different world" anymore and transferred it to different places⁴.

I believe that the PT's administrations implemented politics that modified not only the old political scenario but also, the cultural, spatial, and less intensely the economic one. In political terms, the implementation of the Participatory Budgeting system (*Orçamento Participativo, OP*) advanced towards a new perspective in terms of citizenship⁵. It is obviously a merit of the social movements in Porto Alegre that had been organized since the political "opening" (*abertura*) during the end of the 1980s, that the PT, as the head of the city hall, engaged with and helped these civil organizations make their demands more effective, and gave them more organized authority. The OP, in the words of the

³ <http://www.wsfindia.org/?q=node/2>

⁴ In 2004 it was in Mumbai, India. In 2005, since it was already organized, it happened still in Porto Alegre and in 2006, it happened simultaneously in three different continents: in Africa it was hosted by Mali, in Latin America, strategically by Venezuela, and it would have been hosted by Pakistan but it was cancelled because of the earthquake. In 2007, Nairobi will hold the event.

⁵ The *participatory budgeting (OP)* is the mechanism implemented by the PT's administration for making decisions regarding the politics in the city through popular assemblies. I will review it in the third chapter.

city's ex-mayors Mr. Tarso Genro (Genro 2002: 10), is an "*innovative political contract*" that implies "*a new pattern of citizenship*" between the ordinary citizens and the local government. The OP is a system that makes it possible for the civil society to play a more active role while defining not only how the rulers have to spend public money but also how this public budget can affect and modify people's situation. This is obviously a topic that the conservative parties contested and it was very well expressed in Zero Hora's opinion, which I analyze in chapter five of this work⁶.

With the PT, Porto Alegre also became a city with a vibrant intellectual and artistic scene with art exhibitions and theater and movie festivals that gather a diverse national and international crowd in the city, as well as local people who had never before participated in any artistic venue. This new cultural politics "decentralized the culture,"⁷ bringing theater plays, music performances, and activities like artistic workshops to peripheral areas. This modified the dynamic that is recurrent in Brazilian urban centers, wherein arts and culture are restricted to the elites. The general population could now enjoy these artistic scenes because they were either free or at affordable prices (sometimes the tickets were R\$ 1,00 which was less than 1US\$). Even if the majority of the audience of the festivals were an intellectualized and an educated middle class would be attending these events, the intention of building a more inclusive and diverse city was there, and all ranks of the population could participate when and if interested.

⁶ Zero Hora (ZH) is the local newspaper in Porto Alegre. It belongs to the biggest communication company in South Brazil so that its media monopolizes the information.

⁷ The project was called "decentralization of the culture" and it was also decided via OP, when inhabitants of different areas voted for investments in areas like leisure and culture.

As well as offering free public transportation one Sunday per month, the PT's administration had also followed international trends of using old buildings of the city and renovating them to transform public spaces where these artistic and cultural activities, as well as some meetings of the OP could be held⁸. Some of these buildings were also used during the WSF meetings and became sort of unofficial symbols of the city. The *Usina do Gasômetro*, a former thermo-electric plant with its 107 meters tall chimney located in front of the river is one of the most well-known images of the city that these days hosts shows, scientific meetings, movies, exhibitions, and is also a place where various international intellectuals and scholars presented conferences. The New Year's Eve is celebrated in front of this building with a public dance ball organized by the city hall. The combination of the *passe livre* (free ticket on one Sunday of the month) and the renovation of these buildings (old hotels and old banks, for example) that became cultural centers, opened more opportunities for the ordinary citizens to enjoy the city and to use these public spaces. Clearly these are the ways that the PT's administrations combined public spaces with the city's memory and with what they considered to be the democratization of the culture. At the same time, these new remodeled spaces are also used for international meetings, conventions, and conferences, which end up bringing economic activities to the city⁹.

⁸ These projects were also inspired by cities like Barcelona and its Ciutat Vella project, Bilbao and its innovative cultural plan that includes the Guggenheim Museum, as well as Glasgow, in the UK, where old industry buildings were transformed into cultural and artistic centers. The city of Austin is doing the same when renovating old buildings (and building new ones) in the East side to use them as cultural centers, theaters, and art galleries.

⁹ In 2000, Porto Alegre was elected the Cultural Capital-city of MERCOSUL, because of these high investments in these areas. MERCOSUL is a still-to-be-consolidated economic treaty

All these activities and endeavors have been combined and spread over the peripheral areas and this is what I consider the most creditable politics that I have witnessed with the PT's administrations. I have to emphasize, though, that not necessarily all of the expected to-be-positive effects of these policies reach the population as the PT intends to. If, on one hand globalization was arriving and being implemented in the city, on the other hand some local realities were not quite enhanced. Despite the intentions, not all poor people were necessarily engaged in nor touched by all these political and cultural innovations. Parallel to it, the goal of bringing economic development to the city was a hard one to reach because it depended also on a bigger and more complex structure from both national and international levels. Maybe this is because globalization does not necessarily mean compatibility with the urgent improvement of the one-third of the world's population that lives in slums¹⁰. Here is when I consider that the economic scenario was less intensely transformed because economic development is hard to reach independent of bigger economic growth. That is what I consider one of the Entry of the City program's complexities worth analysis. Considering this globalized scenario that I am pointing out in this section, the EC's population

between Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, and Paraguay. Chile and Venezuela, in different degrees, are little by little being incorporated. It is proving to be a hard agreement to be reached, mainly because of the pressures that the U.S. has been putting on isolated countries. The objective of keeping the title of cultural capital city of the MERCOSUL has been also fulfilled with the Festival of Arts of the MERCOSUL (*Bienal de Artes do Mercosul*) that has been expanded to Latin America, and lately exhibits artists from Mexico to Uruguay. This exhibition is completely free and occupies many different buildings in different zones of the city in a way that the whole city has a little bit of its taste.

¹⁰ (U.N. Centre for Human Settlements. and U.N. Human Settlements Programme. 2004: 4).

is greatly affected by the negative consequences of both national and international global trends.

Undoubtedly, the EC project has been improving what the U.N. considers basic criteria for the “progress” of populations like the ones who inhabit the EC: “access to adequate drinking water, access to adequate sanitation, quality of housing ..., and security of tenure” (U.N. Centre for Human Settlements. and U.N. Human Settlements Programme. 2004: 3,4). The population of the EC is the one affected by the general globalization trend which the U.N. names “informalization” of the urban economies (2004: 2). The fact that EC’s residents are mostly employed in the activity of recycling and their housings are also settled on informal areas (the City Hall calls these “irregular” areas), the EC project is trying to formalize their recycling activities. It is trying to create cooperatives and other associations, and it is also trying to change the geography of the local area, so that the place where the new housing projects are located is being more integrated into other neighborhoods, and into the city and its metropolitan area, including the ‘international’ flow that the city receives. If, on one hand the PT was following the globalization trends and transforming the city into a (officially) more international capital, on the other hand it was trying to adapt the neo-liberal economic paradigms in a way that, instead of diminishing the action of the local government, it was interfering with and increasing the potential of local communities and realities.

Porto Alegre, its demography and its economic position

According to the 2000 national census¹¹, Porto Alegre had 1.360 million people. The estimate is that in 2006 the city's population reached 1.460 million. It is the capitol city of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, whose population was, in 2000, almost 11 million inhabitants. Porto Alegre is the biggest city in the State and it is the tenth biggest in Brazil. Its metropolitan area includes nearly 3.719 million people. As the capital city, it contains the majority of business and services, so that the daily flow of the metropolitan population and even from the state population towards the capital is intense, sometimes configuring the other cities of the metropolitan area as "dormitories". In sixteen years of the PT's administration, Porto Alegre received many awards from various institutions, organizations, and foundations. They were all significant for the *popular administration*, however, some of them were of even greater magnitude for the PT and made history for their administrations. In 2001 the U.N. considered Porto Alegre the capital city in Brazil, out of thirteen total, with the highest H.D.I (human development index). In 1996, the participatory budgeting (O.P.) was also considered by the U.N. one of the forty best programs for public management. Besides, Porto Alegre is one out of seven other capital-cities that are able to receive international loans, which made possible the financial support to be used in the EC project¹². These loans are recompenses that the city hall received for implementing fair public policies in the city.

¹¹ In: Atlas Social da Região Metropolitana de Porto Alegre. (Neves, et al. 2003).

¹² The Entry of the City Project is funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (I.D.B.) and the FONPLATA (Fondo Financiero de Desarrollo para la Cuenca del Plata).

Despite these uncontested acknowledgments of the city's administration, the city followed the national trend that of high income inequality within its inhabitants. According to the *Atlas Social da Região Metropolitana de Porto Alegre* (Social Atlas of the Metropolitan Area of Porto Alegre - RMPOA¹³) (Neves, et al. 2003), in 2000 more than 60 thousands households did not have any income. Two hundred thousand households earned between one and two minimum wages (MW), (R\$ 151,00¹⁴), and conversely, a few more than 60 thousand households earned more than 20 MS. Interestingly, the highest concentration were first at 200 thousand households between one and two minimum salaries, second, were households between three to five (MW), and thirdly were households between five and 10 (MW). Even with these disparities, Porto Alegre was not among the worst cities in Brazil. The graphic representation of the salaries shown on the map has red color, representing an average of salaries between R\$ 1200 and R\$ 9100. On the Atlas, the Entry of the city is covered by the blue color, representing the average between zero and R\$ 400,00.

¹³ The Atlas represents the data on the map of the RMPOA. It divides the metropolitan area using the census zones (that sometimes are bigger, sometimes smaller than the official neighborhoods in the city) and presents the results through the percentage of the population in the whole RMPOA. So, I use theses maps to identify the presented data in Porto Alegre's neighborhoods, especially for the Entry of the City, very easy to be located on this map.

¹⁴ At that time, 1.00 US\$ was approximately 2,00 R\$, so the MW was around 70US\$.

200 thousand. +									
150 thousand. +									
100 thousand. +									
50 thousand. +									
Zero people +									

M. Wage-MW 0 to ½ ½ - 1 1 - 2 2 - 3 3 - 5 5-10 10-15 15-20 20 +

Source: Atlas Social da Região Metropolitana de Porto Alegre. p. 146

According to the *Atlas Racial Brasileiro* (that uses data from the Census Bureau – IBGE - and it is published by PNUD/Brasil¹⁵), the Black population (including what they call *pardos*, “brown/*mestiço*” people) accounts for 44.7% of the national population, totaling 75 million people and making it the second biggest national Black population in the world after Nigeria. Black families are by far the poorest people in Brazil as Blacks correspond to 70% of 10% poorest, i.e, among every 100 poor families, 70 of them are Black. Conversely, within the 100 richest Brazilian families, 16 are Black. Like the *Atlas Racial* says, in 1999 there were two Brazils, one white and another Black. The white Brazil was 2.5 times more rich than the Black Brazil (p. 62).

According to the Brazilian Census regions (*grandes regiões*: North, Northeast, Central-East, Southeast, and South of the country), the State of Rio

¹⁵ Atlas Racial Brasileiro (Brazilian Racial Atlas).

Grande do Sul (South region, along with the States of Santa Catarina and Paraná) contains 23.3% of the poor people in Brazil, consequently being the second richest region in the country. The South region loses only to the rich Southeast (States of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo), which has 21.5% of the poor population of the nation. However, within the second richest region in the country, 20.4% of whites are considered poor, while 38.9% of Black people are poor. Taking into account that the South is considered the whitest region of the country (it concentrates only 5% of the total Black population of the country), these rates are considerably high. Poverty is reflected in the low education levels perpetuating the cycle: Black people goes to the school less because besides the fact that discrimination and racism expel them from the schools and they also often have to work to help with the home income. If Black people do not go to the school, they earn lower salaries because they are less qualified. In 2000, Brazilian illiteracy rates were 8.3% for white people and 18.7% for Black people. More significant were the rates for high education levels in 2000: 11.7% of the white population was registered for universities while as only 2.5% of Blacks were (PNUD p. 62).

Considering other social and economic inequalities measured by the H.D.I. (U.N.), in 2000 Brazil occupied the 73th position (HDI= 0,757) among 84 other countries with indexes between 0,500 and 0,799, rates which are considered medium¹⁶. Taking into account that the H.D.I. analyses the human development politics based on three factors (access to education, life expectancy at birth, and

¹⁶ I am using here data presented by the Black and Feminist NGO Criola (Werneck 2003a).

decent standards of living/income), Brazil's position was not that low¹⁷. However, when the HDI was measured and evaluated between both Blacks and whites, the indexes are the following: whites' HDI= 0.796, Blacks' HDI= 0.680, Brazil's HDI= 0.757, which suggests that the low Black HDI' downward pull on the Brazilian index is greater than the white HDI's upward pull. If we narrow the analysis and look at the HDI in different regions, the State of Rio Grande do Sul presents an index of HDI = 0.808 for white people and HDI= 0.726 for Black people, still lower than the national average index. Since only 5% of the total population of the three states of the South region (Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina and Paraná) is Black, this HDI index is considerably low, given that in these three States the majority of the Black population earns less, is less educated and has lower life expectancy than white poor people.

Labor Market and Socio-Economic Conditions of Black people in Porto Alegre's metropolitan area

In 2000, the DIEESE (Inter-Union Statistics and Social Economic Studies Department) published a *Map of the Black Population in the Brazilian Labor Market* in partnership with the INSPIR (Inter-American Trade Union Institute for Racial Equality), aiming “to map” the situation of the Black population in the labor market in six Brazilian metropolitan areas (Belo Horizonte, Brasília, Porto Alegre, Recife, Salvador and São Paulo) (INSPIR 2000). INSPIR used the 1998 results of the PED (Employment and Unemployment Surveys), which was put

¹⁷ The Human Development Report of 2005, presented data from 2003. Brazil's H.D.I. was 0.792, still considered having a medium human development rate (0.500 – 0.799), occupying the 63rd position in the world. However, within the medium rates, Brazil was in the 6th highest (medium) position. http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2005/pdf/HDR05_HDI.pdf

together by the DIEESE (Inter-Union Statistics and Social Economic Studies Department) and the SEADE (São Paulo State System for Data Analysis). I use the analysis of this data set to demonstrate the situation of the Black population in Porto Alegre's metropolitan area.

In 1998¹⁸, this data analysis showed that the Black population employment situation in Porto Alegre's did not differ from other metropolitan areas that were studied. Black people have to stay longer in the job market, where they enter at the age of 10 and exit after age 40. When economically active (10 and over) they face more unemployment (20.6%) than non-Blacks (15.9%). When separated by gender, Black males face more unemployment (19.2%) than non-Black males (13.1%), and Black women's unemployment rates are higher (22.2%) than non-Black women (18.1%). If on one hand the Black population stays unemployed and looking for a new job for shorter periods of time (38 weeks) than the average population (41 weeks), on the other hand, INSPIR suggests, this shorter period may "indicate greater difficulties in survival" and a greater acceptance of worse working conditions (2000: 106). This shows that they have more casual jobs and intermittent employment trends, i.e. their entrance and exit to/from the labor market is more casual compared to the entrance and exit of the white population.

In general, both Black women and men have more unstable jobs (non-documented), but Black women have it even worst: 10.7% are self-employed while 13.3% of non-Black women are, meaning that non-Black women have more

¹⁸ According to the INSPIR, in 1998 the total population in Porto Alegre's metropolitan area was 3.491 million people. Blacks were 412 thousand people (11.8%) and non-whites were 3.079 million (2000: 22). In 2000, Blacks were 509.078 people, 13.42% of the RMPOA.

opportunities for self-employment. In my fieldwork, I saw non-Black women as sewers, bakers, or running a small hair salon, for example, all informal activities that require a little investment to start off. As domestic workers – even though the law protects these workers, many of them are still non-documented people and work longer hours than the average – 34.6% of the Black women, against 15.3% of non-Black women compose this field. Following the same tendencies of instability and vulnerability in the labor market, in 1998 the average worker was employed in the same job for 62 months, while the average Black worker was for 60 months. Again this point shows their employment trend is more casual and intermittent. When looking at the data analysis about wage differentiation according to race and sex, non-Black workers in 1998 earned an average R\$ 455.00 and non-Black workers who spent the same time working earned R\$ 611.00. The differential for hours paid was 27.32% less for Blacks (INSPIR 2000: 113). Conversely, at the highest wages paid (10 MW), only 3.8% of Black workers made it, while 11.9% of non-Black workers did. This data set demonstrates the wage differentiation according to race and sex.

The instability and vulnerability of the work also give a panorama of the level of precariousness of the Black population's jobs: 19.9% of the Black population occupies unskilled jobs (in which I include, according to what I saw in my fieldwork, construction labor, daily cleaners, *papeleiros*, and other activities that are paid daily, hourly or weekly), while 11.7% of the non-white population works in these circumstances¹⁹. Conversely, in positions of planning,

¹⁹ I also learned while talking with some people of the EC that the answer for questions about jobs can be dissimulated. Many workers would answer that yes, they had a job in X Company, even if I

management, executives, and other higher level jobs, Blacks occupy only 6.6% of these positions, while 20.2% of non-Blacks do the same. It is necessary to remember that Black people have overall lower levels of education, as 18.8% of Black workers that finished high schools, against 29.3% of non-Black workers who had. In a more elementary education level, of the total working-age Black population, 51.9% did not complete primary school, while amongst non-Blacks, 36.9% did not. Even when Black workers have the same education levels and then are able to compete for the same occupation and salary, they will earn less than non-Black people. For example, INSPIR showed that there are wage discrepancies between Black graduates and non-Black graduates: Black workers do not earn more than 81.7% of the total that non-Blacks workers do. These differences are reflected in the number of hours that Black families have to spend working and in the number of members of the families that have to help, to make ends meet.

Looking closer at the Entry of the City, the data available from the City Hall's Department of Housing (DEMHAB) shows that, in 2000 the average salary in that area was 5.78 MW, while in the city it was 9.93 MW, 41.78% less than the capital's average (PMPOA 2002: 14). These statistics erase particular cases that I witnessed in the EC, of families who, when asked about "how much did you make today?" (I was asking about the amount of recyclable material they had sold), many people told me they had made the equivalent of 1US\$, sometimes less. The

noticed that person two of three times a week at home. That is how I found out about jobs that many "X companies" (*firmas*) employed people as cleaners, or as caterers, by hour, or daily, without registering these workers and without paying any social benefits.

DEMHAB registered that 6.31% of that population did not have income at all. I classify these families within the ones who do not have a regular job and sell their recyclable material only occasionally, making the list of people for casual labor (in Brazil, “*bicos*”) or “as needed” labor. Of that population, 41.95% did not have more than 7 years of education, which means they did not complete the primary education level. In the whole city, this percentage is 33.45%. Looking the other end of the scale, in the EC 7.76% had a college diploma, while in Porto Alegre the percentage was 21.08%.

These are data for *vilas* that are inside of the three neighborhoods that are part of the EC program. Although the EC does not have only irregular *vilas*, I am using the data that correspond to the *vilas*, since these are the poorest populations and the ones that I spent more time with. Even if 7.76% of the EC population has a college degree, these people do not inhabit the poorest areas and they do not work on the ground level of picking up recyclable material, although they can have other relationships with it and even relatives involved in the activity. As a matter of fact, I did not meet any person who had a college degree, and considering that I went to the poorest areas, I do think that having not met any of them was a matter of segregation within that segregated area. My observations confirm what the DEMHAB reported separately about the 20 different *vilas*. In the ones that I visited most (Nossa Senhora da Paz, A.J. Renner, Liberdade e Dona Teodora) there is no one with a college degree, the rate of illiteracy is significantly high (8%), and 53% of the people have no more than five years of formal education. Fifty four percent of houses have women as households, and

they earn between 0 MW to 1.5 MW. Amongst the men who comprise the households, 74.24% of them earn no more than 1.5 MW and 24.24% do not earn anything. In these *vilas*, 25% of the economically active population is outside the job market (formal and/or informal) and picking up recyclable materials is only a daily alternative, not a regular job. The majority of the activities of the people who are in the job market are those that do not require a specific qualification: for example, house cleaners, construction workers, and day laborers (lifting and carrying merchandises, grass mowers, etc). Many of these families survive from donations either from private (religious) institutions or from public aid programs.

Finally, these are all inequalities that, as pointed out above, reproduce a cycle: because of the lower standards of living of the previous generation, Black people enter in the job market earlier, go less to school and have more difficulties to finishing it, thus reproducing their lower place in the job market hierarchy. They earn lower salaries because they occupy more unskilled positions and, are consequently more vulnerable to being fired, working in worst conditions, spending more hours and other illegalities. Brazilian salaries are low in average, but Black workers are systematically in the worst conditions, even when well educated and in conditions to compete with the same level of white professionals. The inequalities that the *Map of the Black Population in the Brazilian labor market* shows, affect equally the six metropolitan areas investigated. This means that the situation of Black people in Brazil is not due to generalized poverty of the Brazilian population, but rather Black people are more intensely affected because

they are Black. Thus, their racial condition makes them poorer than other poor people in Brazil.

Race and Urban Space in Porto Alegre – outline of the dissertation

The inequalities that affect Black families in Brazil, and in particular in Porto Alegre, will be discussed throughout this work, with emphasis on particular sections. I consider the inequalities present in Black people's lives as marked by historical processes that have origins still in the 1500s, with the *conquista*, the enslavement of Africa, and the consequent development of the economic system that ended up being globally expanded (Winant 2001: 19-35). In Brazil, segregation of Black people began with their arrivals in the territory and has continued since, always evident in the space. The *senzalas*, the houses of the slaves, were the historical markers that determined the place of Black people after the urbanization of the country. In chapter two, **History of Urbanization in Porto Alegre**, I describe the connections between the disruptions of Black people when they moved from the *senzalas* to the urban centers in South Brazil and then, within these urban centers. Although I do not pursue the entire history of the formation of Black spaces in both urban and rural areas, I summarize this history in Porto Alegre, pointing the various politics of remodeling the city's space first expelled practices considered undesirable for the elite's point of view, and then along with them expelled Blacks from the central areas, creating Black ghettos at that time known and named as *African colonies*.

These processes of cleansing and removal are the starting point of the contemporary prevalence of Black people in these spaces and in the social and

economic hierarchy, of which the *vilas* are one of the most important components. I dedicate a special section to describing the *vilas* and their vulnerable situation with two intentions. This section can be read as a demonstration of what the U.N. has reported about poverty and the increasing slum-ization of the urban centers. This can be also part of my goal. Another purpose, which for me is more imperative, is to display the “state of being” of that population, their housing situation, their position in the informal job market and, finally to give an ethnographic approach to the outcomes of the history of urbanization in Porto Alegre. I hope to demonstrate that the processes of urbanization in Porto Alegre are marked by processes of racialization of poor people who are, not by coincidence, Black people. With this said, I hope to show that race, and not class, is an important and autonomous category to be used for analyzing the general state of “poverty” in Brazilian cities, so that we can first stop thinking that poverty is colorblind. And secondly – and this is one answer to the scholars, intellectuals, and planners that oppose affirmative actions in Brazil – I aim to demonstrate that without looking at the history of Black people and their spaces, we will not be able to combat the persistence of exclusivist consequences from the contemporary politics that have been reproducing and accentuating the inequalities in the country.

In my third chapter, *Historical Continuities*, I depart from the previous history outlined in the second chapter, to discuss contemporary forms of exclusion of Black people in Porto Alegre. I emphasize one of my main arguments in this work that concerns the historical and contemporary processes of racialization of

people and their spaces that these global forms of exclusion reinforce. I refer to specific cases like the urban quilombo of the Family Silva, to demonstrate how race intersects with space and what the occupation of the space tells about race and racism in Porto Alegre. With this, I argue that the silence of the city hall, as well as the reactions of surrounding neighbors against Black and poor families are ways that people and their spaces are racialized. I also explore with ethnographic details how the PT's dealing (or not) with conflicts over the space reflected on the dwellers' lives. Without any opinion survey, I argue that these disputes over the space specified the politics of the PT over the space as well as demonstrated, for those who cast their votes, what type of racial politics the PT performed (or not) when facing (or avoiding) racialization processes.

My fourth chapter, **Politics of Place: Everyday life of the Entry of the City** is where, through ethnography of the everyday life of the EC, I reinforce my argument that Porto Alegre **is** racially segregated city. Although I recognize class as an important factor for this segregation, I hope to show that even in spaces like the *vilas* that are already segregated from the rest of the city because they are poor places, race is a consistent component that accentuates the inequalities between white and Black families. If, on one hand, I also demonstrate class and gender also as important means through which inequalities are salient, on the other hand I display ethnographic examples of processes that focus on race and that affect Black people more extremely. These "racialization processes" are multifaceted: they are, for example, evidenced when the dwellers disagree about the meaning given to the spaces, when negotiating power positions, and when using

stereotypes to accuse Black people in general, especially Black women. Although I recognize gender as one of the levels through which racism is expressed, I analyze partially these discriminations as part of the everyday life of the *vilas*. I acknowledge, however, that gender deserves a special and deeper discussion than the one that I present here.

Finally, in my fifth chapter **Zero Hora and the coverage about the PT, poverty, and Black people**, I analyze the discourses that Zero Hora (ZH), the main newspaper in Porto Alegre and in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, produces, reproduces, and reinforces as common sense about this “racialized population” and their spaces. I look at different ways that the newspaper looks at poor and Black people to demonstrate that ZH uses different images to talk about both white and Black poor people and, in doing so, contributes to the racialization processes that demoralize Black families. I also contend in this chapter that ZH has a clear position about the politics that should be implemented in Porto Alegre – and by extension, in the nation as a whole. From this argument, I demonstrate that ZH was an oppositionist media against the PT as the ruling party in City Hall and in keeping with that, it stated a world view of an “adequate” city that is clearly something against the way the PT was governing and transforming the city.

One of the particular matters that ZH was indirectly attacking was the *popular administration* and its pro-poor people politics²⁰. It was, for example, through its silences about the improvements of the peripheral areas that ZH was

²⁰ *Popular Administration* was the motto of the four PT’s administrations.

showing its discontentment with the PT, but more than that, it was through the demands for politics and “visible works” that would affect and benefit more white middle classes that the ZH also demonstrates what its editorialists envisioned for the city. These opinions were clearly exposed when ZH concentrated on traffic problems, flooding, and the consequent “lacks” in the city, including the lack of a better politics to “civilize” poor people, the dwellers of the *vilas*. I also consider profoundly racist the way that ZH used to talk about these dwellers, emphasizing the stereotypes that related poor people and places with all sorts of inhumanities and abnormalities. I argue in this chapter that ZH is only one, indeed an important means that creates stereotypes, and produces and reproduces common senses about poor and Black people. I will explore some examples of how ZH addressed Black people, which was rarely openly as Blacks – and the only way that we had of knowing they were Black was because of the pictures – is one more silence that supports the pretended non-racist, or color-blind media.

Race and Space: does race interfere in urban segregation?

As I pointed before, I locate Porto Alegre in the global scenario in that, on one hand it internationalizes the city, its economics and cultural activities, and, on the other hand, and despite the politics that the PT implemented at the local level, poverty increased and with it, slum-ization of less privileged people did, too. The U.N. report considers global factors acting over the processes of formation of slums like:

“the internal and external forces that lead to the segregation and deterioration of particular areas. These include market forces within cities, inappropriate government interventions and regulations, global economic changes and changes in the orientation of policy that have led to greater inequality and

have inadvertently expanded the urban informal sector while failing to deliver affordable and secure housing, as well as urban services” (United Nations Human Settlements Programme. 2003: xxxiii).

This is not a phenomenon particular to Porto Alegre or less developed countries but rather a global tendency that affects developed country as well (U.N. Centre for Human Settlements. and U.N. Human Settlements Programme. 2004)²¹. The same U.N. report conceptualizes slums as “*a multidimensional concept involving aspects of poor housing, overcrowding, lack of services and insecure tenure*” (2004: 1). I use this multidimensional notion to talk about a reality for poor Black and non-Black people in the Entry of the City in Porto Alegre.

The city hall calls these spaces “irregular” areas because of the same characteristics that the U.N. reports. The city hall also refers to them as “slums/*favelas*”, implying all these characteristics described in the U.N.’s concept and others like being “at risk”. The Entry of the City, for example is also considered an area “at risk” because some houses are located only a few meters distant from the high-way and others are located in swampy, flooding, and/or mudslides areas. The city hall calls also irregular areas and *favelas* to imply their “illegal” situation because they are squat areas. I avoid calling them so because of the negative connotations that the word “*favela*” has in Porto Alegre, especially

²¹ The U.N. estimates that 924 million people (32% of the world’s population) live in slums, concentrated in developing countries: South-Central and Eastern Asia concentrates 50% of slums dwellers, 14% in Latin America and 17% in sub-Saharan Africa. (United Nations Human Settlements Programme. 2003: 2). Brazil’s estimated population living in slums is around 51.7 million people, 36.6% of the total population (Davis 2006: 24).

amongst the people who inhabit these areas. I refer to them as *vilas* because this is the local denomination for these spaces as well for their residents.

From the almost 1.4 million people in Porto Alegre, 287.161 are living in 464 irregular areas (*vilas*), summing up 21.11% of the total population of the capital-city. (PMPOA 2000; PMPOA 2002). The results of the report which the Entry of the City Project was based on pointed to 31.964 people dispersed in three different neighborhoods, being 12.872 residents living in irregular conditions, summing up 40.27% of the whole area (EC). These 12.872 people are 4.48% of the city's total population. The EC is not the biggest irregular area in the city, however, it is probably the most visible one since it is located, like the name says, at the entrance of the city, in the way of people who come from the countryside, from other States, and even from neighboring countries. Besides, the EC is also located very close to the international airport, which also makes it visible when arriving or leaving the city by airplane.

The Brazilian census does not provide data that demonstrate the racial rates of the population living in each different area of the city. Sociologists such as E. Telles (Telles 1992; 1993; 2003: 161-184) who have been concerned with urban segregation, argue that in Brazil it "is not self-evident and it requires more systematization", although, he keeps arguing, it can be a bigger problem than many Brazilians can imagine (Telles 2003: 163). I concur with his second account and diverge from his first one. In my research, I use both oral history of the Black population and my own observation of Black people on the streets of the city, but especially in the Entry of the City. As I referred to at the beginning of this work,

the oral history of part of the Black population told me about the displacements and removals of Black families from areas that became increasingly more expensive, already pointing to a clear process that nowadays is called gentrification.

In trying to identify people's background, I first noticed that despite 13.42% of the total population in the metropolitan area being Blacks and Afro-descendent people, the presence of this population is overwhelming in spaces of the city where they concentrate. These are cultural associations such as the *schools of samba (escolas de samba)*, many Afro-Brazilian religious temples, as well as public spaces and private spaces, such as some corners of downtown areas, some bars and restaurants that are being used by Black people²². These places configure agglomerates where 99% of the visitors are Blacks and they make their presence in the city more evident. Seeing them all together is a good way of recognizing the incidence of the Black population in the city²³. Also, in walking around the Entry of the City, besides Black people overwhelming presence, I realized that inter-racial marriage was something that I had to consider more than I had realized before. Even when I was talking with a Euro-descendent

²² These spaces are sometimes named after African references, for example one point in downtown where Black people gather and they call it "*a esquina do Zaire*" [the Zaire's corner] (Bittencourt Jr 1995).

²³ I cannot forget the visit of a friend from the northeast Brazil to Porto Alegre, the region where the majority of population is Black and indigenous descendent. After walking around downtown for a couple of hours, she said: "I'm impressed by the amount of Blacks here in the south, I could not imagine them!" This comment was not only because of the "number" itself but rather because of the eyes of this friend, who was looking for her equals. When we went to visit another neighborhood, an obvious place for gathering and amusement of the white middle and upper classes, she observed: "now I can see what they talk about when referring to the South as 'an European' region."

woman, I became aware that, oftentimes, her children were afro-descendent kids. This factor also accentuates the supposed “invisibility” of the Black population in Porto Alegre, since many light skin people might not be considered Blacks, but *morenos*, *cor de canela* (brown, tawny, canela), are for me variations of the same racial theme²⁴.

My argument here is that looking at Black people and their descendents and recognizing them as such, is not attributing “race where it does not exist”, like various peoples that oppose affirmative actions in Brazil are arguing right now. Rather, recognizing their ancestors and their origins is first a matter of valorizing this identity (in Brazil, unfortunately there is a common expression that refers to African-descendent people who are not visibly Black nor visibly white as having the “*color of donkey when running away*” [*cor de burro quando foge*]). My opinion is that referring to someone with this expression – besides the obvious racism -- is already recognizing that this person is in between one and the other line, and at the same time is in neither of them. Second, it has obvious political implications and within them, recognition that those kids who are not seen or recognized as African-descendents will probably have the same future as their parents did, embedded in the inequalities and disadvantages that **are** going to be determined by their skin color. This is an “objective” fact. That is how I disagree with E. Telles’ second argument about racial segregation in Brazilian urban centers being “not self-evident” because in order for it to be sociologically self-

²⁴ E. Telles (2003: 150) argues that, “although marriages with ‘mulattoes’ apparently are less stigmatized than a marriages with a Black person, in the South it seems to be different, since Blacks and *pardos* (brown people) are treated similarly”. The author’s finding contradicts even more the idea of a non-racialist nation.

evident – I understand he is talking about the “objectivity” of the statistics -- it requires, again, recognizing the ancestors of these persons, whose inheritance and physical traits will, inevitably, objectively interfere in their future. This is also how, in looking to the face of the people in the Entry of the City, I understand that the majority of those people are either visibly Black or Afro-descendent and those who are not hold obvious advantages.

One of the common questions that I had to answer while doing my fieldwork in Porto Alegre concerned how I would identify who is and who is not Black in the city. While laughing at this question and saying that in the middle of so many white people and blue and green eyes it would be very easy to identify who is Black, this question also made me think about the difficulties for some people to think of Blacks – but specially the so-called *mestiços* (or tawny, or *morenos*), or the ones who are not “purely” Black. In a city like Porto Alegre where Blacks are minority, to not identify who is and who is not Black is, at least an exercise of either inability or unwillingness to acknowledge the history of people. It is a common sense that the white middle and upper classes have either a maid or someone at the entrance that is either a Black or Afro-descendent person, open and closing the doors. In this sense, whites have more contact with Black peoples and the city is not that segregated in the same patterns than U.S. urban centers. However the fact that Blacks have contact with Euro-descendent people does not mean that there are no racist attitudes from the later towards the former.

In my fieldwork I registered many observations that communicated the dislikes of having “those Blacks there [*aqueles negros/negrada/negrone*]” which

contradicts the thesis that residential segregation of Black people could be due to self-segregation, first because whites did not express their unwillingness about having Blacks as neighbors (Turra and Venturi 1995), and second because when self-segregating, Blacks would avoid potentially racist attitudes (Telles 2003: 175). In this work I contend that the EC is a racially segregated place because of the visible fact that it is overwhelmingly inhabited by Black people and it has its own internal segregation between Blacks and whites, and second, it is also a racialized space because of the general external attitudes of Porto Alegre's population towards who is Black and *papeleiro* – I include here the surrounding neighbors and other dwellers not that close, including some representative from the city hall. Despite the fact that Black and euro-descendent people live in the EC, my findings indicate that, even when these two groups share the same position in the space and sometimes they are both *papeleiros*, Black families end up living in clear disadvantage, so that if the segregation is “moderate”, it affects negatively and more visibly Black families²⁵.

I also contend that given the small percentage of Black people living in Porto Alegre, the city has its highly segregated spaces as well as its less segregated ones, which I name a **disaggregated segregation**. On one hand, neighborhoods like the Mont Serrat (the old African Colony), Menino Deus, and Cidade Baixa (Low City), all historically Black neighborhoods that the history of urbanization of the city transformed into white middle- and upper-class neighborhoods and that maintain part of their original Black population, are

²⁵ This point is also discussed by Vargas for the context of the city of Rio de Janeiro (Vargas 2005).

substantial evidences that this history spread its Black population over different neighborhoods so that they do not live in ghettos, like it happens in the American cities. Porto Alegre's "ghettos" are mixed spaces, again because of the percentage of the Black population that is spread over both the metropolitan areas, and more recently in peripheral places like the Entry of the City. However, I argue that within these "ghettos", Black population is the more affected by continuous displacement and disadvantages²⁶. Even if it is not in my geographic area of study, I can refer to the explicit case of Porto Alegre's neighborhood called Restinga, located 12 km away from the downtown area, built in the 1960s for the purpose of removing some *vilas* of the central areas, and whose population was majority Black people. This neighborhood became known as "the" place of Black families in Porto Alegre, even if nowadays other Euro-descendent families were incorporated.

I understand that although class is an important factor in determining the space where people live – and the predominance of certain people and not others in certain places – I would say that class position is a consequence of the racial condition, as I demonstrated above using the data organized by INSPIR. As it happens in the U.S., even if and when Black workers have the same education level, they do not earn the same wages, which means that, like in the U.S., race and not class is the "key structural factor for Black poverty" (Massey and Denton 1993: 9). Race is a key factor in Brazil especially if we consider that it is not

²⁶ In 1996, Oliveira attested that *favelas* in the city of Rio de Janeiro "are not exclusively racial enclaves" ... "even though Blacks make up the majority of the population" (Oliveira 1996: 73).

possible to talk about a Black middle class in Brazil but rather in individuals or families who are part of the middle class²⁷.

In this work, my first thesis is that race is an independent and valuable category to analyze urban segregation in Brazil. With this, I aim to show the intricacies of Brazilian racial projects (Omi and Winant 1986; Winant 1994) expressed in urban centers and in which I include the acceptance of the common sense of the de-racialization of the Nation – the racial democracy myth is only the most important component of this common sense - and the consequent invisibility of Black people. While understanding the importance of the racial factor expressed in the occupation of the city's space, I do not minimize the economic influences on this distribution. I am, however, signaling that race is a significant factor to take into account when analyzing urban segregation to the extent that it determines what I found to be segregation within segregated areas. I also understand that this “racial project” is incorporated into the national common sense and reflected on the sociological production, since this literature has been overemphasizing the inequalities as if they were only based on class. This is to say that, to consider that poor people live in the peripheral areas because they are poor and not because they are Blacks AND poor, is part of the Brazilian common sense that is produced and reproduced by intellectuals, politicians, and social scientists that ignore the racial factor. They do this, first, because they are part of this non-racist ideology, and secondly because in doing so, they inevitably believe that thinking about “race” is against the structure and organization of

²⁷ I want to express my gratitude to Athayde AJ Motta, my colleague in the African Diaspora Program at the University of Texas, who came up with this comment in one of our conversations.

Brazilian-ness. However, I have to say that with rare exceptions, Black people – the ones that are the most affected by the fakeness of the inexistence of “racialized” thought in Brazil – they know exactly what it is to be Black and the real consequences of it (dos Santos 2006). Thus, in this work I am counter-posing these intellectuals, politicians, and authors who are part of this history of racial-blindness and in the present days have been arguing against affirmative actions²⁸.

My second main thesis in this work is based on Porto Alegre’s historical patterns of urbanization that are reflected in the distribution of its space. As I demonstrate in the second chapter, Porto Alegre follows a trend of dispersing Black people throughout its spaces. I demonstrate how Black people’s history in Porto Alegre is made by dislocations and removals, so that the public policies and the new plans and ordinances disaggregated Black dwellers and deconcentrated them from their original spaces. The results of these actions were, on one hand, the dislocation of Black families to the peripheral areas and mainly to where contemporarily is considered the metropolitan areas²⁹. Another more evident result is reflected on the everyday use and occupation of the public and private spaces. As I have already mentioned the appropriation of these public spaces, I consider it as a reaction to these historical removals and exclusion from the city’s

²⁸ The intellectuals and politicians are many and I will not name them here. The list of contemporary social scientists that have been arguing against the affirmative actions is also long and they have been expressing this position both in the main newspaper as well as in their own publications. Historically – and even when the discussion about affirmative actions were not in place – some of these works (about poor people, poverty, the underclass and similar) have been ignoring the racial factor.

²⁹ The only place that became visible, as a Black space is the vila Restinga, because of the obvious removal that happened in the 1960s. Restinga is a contemporary Black neighborhood not only because of the number of Black people that lives there but more specifically because of the racialized stereotypes that are attributed to that neighborhood.

formal spaces. Many of them located in central areas, and I consider these appropriations as alternatives for Black people to perform and to potentiate Black identities as responses to the removals, disaggregation, deconcentration and consequently segregation (Bittencourt Jr 1995; Hayden 1995).

Considering the demography of the Black population in the city of Porto Alegre, it became even more difficult to talk about homogeneous “ghettos” formed by race, because, like I have been demonstrating, *vilas* and poor spaces in Porto Alegre are racially “mixed” places. This can confuse researchers that know the U.S. literature – both reality and stereotypes – and that address poverty in racially segregated spaces. In Porto Alegre, I argue that, different from the reality in Rio de Janeiro where 3 million Black people inhabit the city and their visibility is more prominent, Black people’s demographic rate is **dispersed** and **disaggregated** over the peripheries and the metropolitan areas. The contrary should be also true: the absence of Black families in rich areas can be used as a reverse demonstration of this argument.

The third thesis of this work encompasses the previous two and refers to the prominent racialization of people and their spaces. Throughout this work I follow the edited volume by Cross and Keith (1993), and the works of Susan Smith (1993), Keith (1993), and Goldberg (1993) published in this volume, in which they discuss the different processes of “racialization of people and spaces” as multifaceted events that conform ideologies, images, and classifications about poor and racially non-white people. All these works depart from the idea that “race is the privileged metaphor through which the confused text of the city is

rendered comprehensible” (Keith and Cross 1993: 9), and that the processes of racialization of what these two authors call “underclass”, implies the generation of at least three ideas that describe the [underclass] condition: “levels of illegitimacy, of violent crime, and of labor market withdrawal” (11), all images that relate to both, space and people and that I found in my fieldwork. Susan Smith (128-143) defines racialization of spaces as the processes “by which residential location is taken as an index of the attitudes, values, behavioral inclinations and social norms” of people ... “who are assumed to live in particular ...neighborhoods” (p. 143). Finally, David T. Goldberg (45-60) theorizes about how racism is related to urban location and demonstrates how the categories used to think about and to describe peripheral spaces are embedded in biological – almost biomedical – metaphors. These categories generate an “urban geometry” and impose a “set of exteriorities and interiorities” (45), defining the good insiders and the bad outsiders, necessarily the ones who, because they are pathologically “degenerated”, need to be and can be “regenerated” (54).

In this section I am quoting the term “underclass” from Keith and Cross’ introduction. Not all authors refer to racialized people as “underclass”. Goldberg, for example, refers to “groups of people constituted as ‘races’” (46) that “are, or traditionally have been, excluded in racial terms or on racial grounds from social powers, rights, goods or services” (58). I follow more persistently Smith’s conceptualization of racialized people: “I use the term ‘black’ to refer to racialized minorities of South Asian, African, or Caribbean origin or descendent” (143). Although the population of the EC is not South-Asian or Caribbean, I

designate as “Blacks” all African-descendents of that *vilã*, and I understand them to be “racialized” because, drawing again from Smith, I acknowledge these groups’ “common exclusion of key rights associated with settlement in, or citizenship of Britain”, she says – Brazil, I say. In this sense, I do perceive the whole population of the Entry of the City (Blacks and Euro-descendent people) as racialized people because the ideas that are ascribed to them are directly tied to their spaces as “index[es] of attitudes, values, behavioural inclinations and social norms...” (Smith 1993: 133).

Although I understand that spaces and these “indexes” are decisive in determining that people in peripheral areas are the ones who will not be racialized, I look for the understanding of the processes of racialization of the “racial[ly] different” ones that are expressed in these groups’ ordinary life. These differences have nothing to do with an essentialization of their racial belongings, and although skin color is the evident factor that will exacerbate the existence of racism, their racial belongings are rather the vehicles through which their identities are “interpolated” (Hall 1996: 5), constructed as the “other ... who can be spoken”. In this way, I consider black people as the target population in the Entry of the City by the racist discourses from all sides: the official instance represented by the city hall and the neighbors and the bigger society whose voice is (ambitiously) represented by the local newspaper.

I consider that, because the PT was running the City Hall – a leftist party that accepts and questions demands, rejects or absorbs them, and negotiates with the different groups over the tensions that come out of these processes – the

identities that are produced within the EC are neither purely oppositional nor purely conformist. This is, on one hand, due to the “way of the PT governing” (Genro 1997a) and, on the other hand, because this population is situated within the contemporary global processes situated in the space and time that I described before, and of which Porto Alegre is only a small part. I also consider that the Black population in Porto Alegre – despite its small demographic presence – is a small part but not a less important one and one in the global diasporic processes that involve Black people throughout the world. As in any other nation, Black people in Porto Alegre are “subjects and products” (Hamilton 1995: 403) of the racialized processes that have the transatlantic displacement as a constituent of their history (Robinson 2000), and, as underlined by Stuart Hall, have their beginning in the Americas - the geographic place, I emphasize (1994: 401). Moreover, these processes did not stop there. They have continuously been produced and reproduced, as the population involved has been changed and transformed. These dynamics are constitutive of the African Diaspora and, indeed, signify even more.

Talking about African Diaspora implies talking about these “narratives of displacement” (Hall 1994: 402), the continuities, changes and ruptures made within and by the people that are the subjects of the Diaspora, and the negotiations of their identities constantly in (“disparate”) construction (Gordon 1998). Although many authors who theorize more consistently about the African presence and influence in Brazil are more concerned about the cultural “continuities” (Bastide 1971; Herskovits 1985, among others) than the

consistencies of these ideas, I follow the authors who understand the Diaspora as “impure” (Hall 1999: 8) because it is subject to change in its displacements (Hamilton 1995).

The population of the EC suffers multilayered (and racialized) displacement that consists of being Black (and *papeleiros*) in an “imagined” white society, lives inside of the system and excluded from it, and are residents of a peripheral space that carries the worst connotations in the city; I consider that all these aspects together situates this population in a (global) reality that is both within and outside. On one hand, these residents are part of the “dominant forces” of Western models, the ones that Stuart Hall (1999: 17) refers to as part of the “cultural homogenization”, “McDonald-ization”, “Nike-ization” and I extend these forces to the spheres beyond the market cultural homogeneity, meaning the racialization processes that I have been talking about. On the other hand, I continue with S. Hall in seeing this population as “decentering Western models” and “subverting” them when driving their horses in the middle of the busy avenues, when pulling their pushcarts and finally, when making money out of the leftovers of the bigger society. This is how this population is, at once, within and outside of the dominant system. It also shows what it means to be part of the diaspora in Porto Alegre and share not only the axes of the diasporic processes, but more importantly re-actualizes them in this context of urban segregation. These dual processes are reinforced by different levels of discourses that “interpolate” this population as “criminals”, “dirty”, “disorganized”, “contagious” and their spaces as “disordered”, “non-human”, and “dangerous” among others

(Barlow 2003; Browning 1998; Collins 2000; Fredrickson 1971; Gilroy 1993; Goldberg 1993; Goldberg 2002a; Hooks 1992; Robinson 2000).

Global ethnography of the racialized people and spaces

My interests in research about Black spaces in the cities started in the early 1990s, while I was conducting my Master's research in the Mont Serrat neighborhood in Porto Alegre. Being a late resident of the *African Colony* myself, I became more interested in mapping the history of black people in these spaces as I heard about them from my religious community. I enjoyed spending my time walking around the neighborhood with my godmother and hearing her histories about *antigamente* (the old times), when she mixed details of her informal visits to her neighbors, with carnival, catholic church fundraising parties³⁰, and, the most exciting for her, the *Batuque*'s rituals. While conducting my Master's research, and knowing that I was dealing with elder people who had the most interesting stories that I would not be able to hear anymore, I gathered the most oral stories that I could – mainly from my godmother and her old religious kin – in order to map the history of the *Batuque* in that neighborhood and, as an extension, in the city.

Although my experience in the Mont Serrat was a very significant one in affective terms, I also had a second experience with a religious family and a

³⁰ My godmother's parents, at the end of the 19th Century, were members of the neighborhood's catholic church, as were many others Black families at that time. Being an active catholic member was only one way that Black families found to become an (accepted) member of the dominant society. Her mother, like many other black families, was also a member of the *Batuque*. Many of these catholic *irmandades* (brother- and sisterhoods) were official instances that struggled against slavery (see chapter 2).

forced removal that happened in the *vila Mirim*, which was my first experience with a social movement against removal. This was the first time that I became committed to a social movement for housing rights. In that place – one of the irregular areas of the city – I witnessed a popular organization and used my anthropologist's position to engage with the community that was claiming the permanence in the area. I tell this story as evidence of witnessing racialization of the space and of the people as well as a testimony of my frustration with the results.

Although I prefer not to stay in the city during my summers, I spent some of them in Porto Alegre, mainly because of the coincidence with the carnival period that happens in February. I enjoy going to schools of samba, where I can meet my black friends and see, like any other audience, the rehearsals and the preparations for the parade. Many times I had to go to the schools of samba by myself and meet my *carnavalescos* friends there. During the carnival holiday the city is quite empty and the people who stay in the city do not even go out, probably because of the heat. Used to an lively, crowded streets, I felt a little bit odd walking in my neighborhood, as the spaces are too empty and quiet, which can encourage assaults and robberies.

It was one of these days of carnival that I decided to go to *Mãe Dorsa's* house, a godmother in the *Batuque* in a peripheral area of Porto Alegre called *vila Mirim*. It was a hot day and I took the bus and headed into her *vila*. The bus crossed a fancy avenue, where I could see shops for imported cars, expensive bars and restaurants and huge residential skyscrapers, all of them gated communities

with private security and nice facades. In that same avenue there was also a small *vila*, at that time disguised with a wooden wall that protected the city from seeing that poor part in the core of one of the most expensive areas in Porto Alegre. The bus also passed in front of one of the shopping malls and followed its course, now toward the end of its route. Just before, it passed in front of *Dado Bier*, a local brewery that has also a bar-restaurant where local elites gather for events. Finally, at the end of that avenue and in front of the end of the bus route, there were two skyscrapers still in construction. The company which was building them was going through bankruptcy, so the work had stopped. I left the bus alone, being the only person to go to that point in the city on that Saturday of carnival. As I walked into one of the alleys of *vila Mirim* heading into *Mãe Dorsa's* place, a police officer, holding a gun, for me similar to a rifle, came out from one of the buildings and stopped me. He asked me what I was doing there and immediately answered his own question: “*are you here to buy the white one [a branquinha]*”³¹ I looked at him in surprise at his words – and at his gun – and said: “No, I’m here to visit my godmother”, to which he answered: “*Don’t you know that this vila is a dangerous place?*” I said “*No, I don’t. What I do know is that not everybody here is dangerous... may I go now to visit the godmother?*” and went back on my way to entering the *vila*. As I arrived I told *Mãe Dorsa* what had happened and said that I did not understand what a police officer was doing in that private construction. She explained to me that, because the work had stopped, the police were taking care of the buildings so that people would not invade them.

³¹ “The white one” is the slang for cocaine.

We talked about the fact that it was a police officer and not a private security guard who was taking care of the buildings.

I had been to *vila Mirim* other times. I had noticed that in front of the tiny alley there were almost always a couple of young boys, who in the first time that they saw me also had asked me the same question that the police officer did: if I was there to buy for “the white one”. My answer was always the same. As I continued walking into the *vila*, my arrival was announced. I could hear the voices behind me yelling to the others in the next corner of the alley that I was going to see my godmother: *hey, going to see the godmother!* And these voices were already ahead of me “...to see the godmother!” Thus, it is true that in the *vila Mirim* there was drug traffic. However, it is obvious that there were also families who were workers, like *Mãe Dorsa*. I met her and her family through a friend and colleague, also an anthropologist and black activist³². He explained to me that part of *vila Mirim*, specifically the part where *Mãe Dorsa* lived, was going to be removed. *Mãe Dorsa*, a black woman in her mid sixties, did not want to leave the area, since she had been living there for more than forty years. In her house, her two other daughters, Vera and Carmem, shared the house with her and her grandsons and granddaughters. It was a big family of mainly women and the house was quite big. Around that time, I began to recognize that the bigger the house, the longer the time of living in the area. *Mãe Dorsa*’s house also had a

³² The whole process is documented in his Master’s thesis (dos Anjos 1993).

special room for her *terreiro*³³, where afterwards I started to go to celebrate the *Orixás* of the house with them.

My friend explained the process of removal. The City Hall – already administered by the PT – built a new housing project, far away from that place³⁴. Some families had to be removed since that area was considered a “risky area” and *Mãe Dorsa* was one of the families included on the list. Besides, exactly where her house was, was supposed to be a street to link the avenue where the bus drove through. *Mãe Dorsa* and her family did not want to leave the area. Besides the solid bonds that she and her family had nurtured within the place, the neighborhood had all that they needed within a walking distance: schools for the children, health care and bus routes. Besides, the *Orixás* also have their own ties to the place and this was one of the reasons that I used to negotiate their staying with the City Hall.

When my friend explained about the situation, he asked me for my help, as an anthropologist and an affiliate with the Afro-Brazilian religion, participating in the claims with the city hall along with the partnership of people of the black movement. So I did. I started to participate in the meetings and discussions that the families of *vila Jardim* were having, led by Vera, one of *Mãe Dorsa*’s daughters. Vera and I became close friends and started to spend more time

³³ *Terreiro* is the Afro-Brazilian name for the place of Afro-Brazilian religions worship and rituals. Usually the *terreiro*’s territory is not restricted to the room, but it includes the house, the yard – with the plants and trees – and is extended to the surrounding public spaces like some street corners, which are also places for offers to the *Orixás*.

³⁴ After my experience at the Entry of the City, I realized that these were the patterns for the PT’s housing projects in Porto Alegre (two bedrooms, one living room extended to the kitchen and one bathroom).

together sharing our commonalities. Among them were the samba schools and the carnival. Although rooting for different schools, we spent some summer nights together visiting some of them. Because public transportation in Porto Alegre is not the safest at nights, Vera spent some nights over my place, which was located in a more accessible neighborhood, compared to *vila Jardim*. Vera was a domestic worker and some Saturdays she used to go from my place directly to her work. With Vera, I began to understand all the process of their struggles, the names of the people in the city hall and who was allied and who was not. She also explained why her family resisted moving into the new area. Besides the history of the family and the neighbors in the area, the *Orixás* “attachment” to the place was used as an explanation and as a way of bargaining. As an affiliate of the Afro-Brazilian religion, I knew already that the *Orixás* are divinities that, similar to the Greek pantheon, have human characteristics so that they are “raised and taught” according to what humans make them to “get used” to. They “are used” to things like types of food, gifts and rituals, all routines established by us, their sons and daughters. It is these gifts that make them more or less reliable, helpful and/or trustful. I also knew that it could be problematic to change the practices all gathered in certain territories. That is, they get used to what we, human beings, offer to them and to the places that we define for them to “work” for us.

Vera also told me stories of her childhood in that area. She explained how attached she was to that place and how she grew up knowing and playing with the children of the neighbors, then all adults as she was. Because of her solid ties with the neighbors, they elected her president of the neighborhood association and she

guided the negotiation with the city hall. She explained what the strategies were, and little by little I became more familiar with that case of removal and imposed urban projects. We used various reasons to negotiate with the city hall: the more than forty years of residence of the inhabitants in the area and the ties built with the place; the accessible location of schools, bus routes, and health care; the fact that many workers had their jobs around the area and did not need to take – and pay for – public transportation services; and finally but not least, we used the religious argument, which was not even taken into account. For all of the previous reasons the city hall had a counter-argument but they did not even listen to the religious one. The *Orixás*, even though part of the everyday life of that family and of the neighbors, were not taken into consideration. Each time that we tried to talk about them, a new theme was brought into discussion, mainly posing the advantages of leaving the area. As the negotiations did not progress and the moving grew closer, Mãe Dorsa became very up set. She talked about the *Orixás* as if they were her children – although calling them “fathers” and “mothers³⁵” – and one of her main concern was about moving them, how to carry and where to install them, since the new houses were much smaller than hers.

One day I was at home and I received a phone call from one of Mãe Dorsa’s granddaughters. Vera, in her mid-forties, had had a brain stroke. She had paralyzed one side of her body and could not walk; she lost the ability to speak. It took more than one year for her to partially recover her speech. Now she does not walk very easily and in fact, she does not go further than Mãe Dorsa’s house, two

³⁵ This is the way that we, the “sons” and “daughters” of the *Orixás* refer to them.

houses down from hers. The mobilization at *vila Mirim* decreased and the families started to foresee the moving as an inevitable fact. Mãe Dorsa got very involved with Vera's problem and did not go ahead with the claiming process. The rest of the neighbors could not see how to keep the negotiation, since for them it was going to be like starting from the scratch. Little by little I saw her talking about the moving out as a fact and deciding how to move the *Orixás* into the new area. We requested from the city hall a truck for moving them in the night, since they cannot take the sun light. Once at *Chácara da Fumaça*, the location of the new housing project, we started to bargain for an area to build her *terreiro* because the new houses did not have enough room for them. Mãe Dorsa's new house had an empty small plot right next to it and we demanded it as the possible one. The city hall made us discuss with the rest of the community and to gather the signatures of agreement from them. We did it, the neighbors agreed and we got the plot. After two long years of financial contributions, working-parties and many difficulties, Mãe Dorsa finally had her *terreiro* built. Two years later, she officially opened it with a ritual celebration to her *Ogum*, the *Orixá* of the house. Vera got a sort of pension from the welfare system. She never worked anymore, and barely could go to the physiotherapy because of the long walk distance up to the bus station. She spends her days in the company of her daughter, her mom, her sisters, and the religious community that comes to visit the family.

This story that was my introduction to my commitment with housing struggles particularly with black people. In 2002, I went to Luanda, Angola, and to Maputo, Mozambique, trying to pursue an initially comparative research

project for my Ph.D., and if I was not exactly surprised with what I saw, I could not foresee what I was going to meet. During my visit to Luanda, I wrote in my journal:

“Luanda is a capital-city that is just coming out of a civil war [I arrived there in June 2002; the leader of the war had been killed in February 2002]. My feeling is that the local government spent all its money fighting against Savimbi and did not make any improvement in the city after the Portuguese colonizers were ousted. It is just a beautiful city on the Atlantic coast, and very vivid with its streets crowded with native people walking around on the streets, the informal commerce occupying all the corners. ...It is said that the city can hold 700 thousand people but right now it has more than 3 million. I talked with these people of the ..., a Canadian NGO, and they told me that, although the local government does not know the right numbers, their estimate [the NGO’s] is that informal houses in Luanda make up approximately 70% of the whole urban area, and I can see it. The exception is formal houses, not informal ones; while the musseques [the favelas of Luanda] are the rule. Right behind this house where I am staying there is a huge musseque and I went with my friend to buy a little thing. Everything seems very familiar to me, the same corner stores, the same infra-structure, the same improvisation. What changes is the material that it is done in: in Luanda, musseque is the name for the reddish clay that covers that part of the coast and that they use to build their houses. The houses are also covered either with zinc or with straw. In Porto Alegre, the vilas are mostly built with wood and sometimes with cement. Clay is used more in rural areas. They are all native Black people, most of them emigrated from the areas where the civil war was happening. Local government is investing in very fancy condominiums – probably gated – on the ocean shore, for public servants who live in musseques. They do not think it is appropriate for people who work for the government to live in these places. Once upon a time, I heard something similar in Porto Alegre, but it was for police officers” (field work journal, July 2002).

After Luanda, I went to Mozambique. This country is considered by the World Bank to be a sort of model of development and transformation after investments were successful. My visit to Maputo showed me that if that was the model – a visibly segregated city, with a varied international elite – not only

Portuguese – with huge investments in tourism and construction companies, even if it is bringing more money to the population that lives out from it, it seems that only a few people are benefiting. What I witnessed is a city with evident dissimilar areas, some of them indeed so visibly segregated that had security guard boots in the corners impeding pedestrians paths over certain streets. Based on examples like Nelson Mandela’s and his Mozambican wife Graça Mandela’s residency, I believe other members of Maputo’s elite – who probably do not have the political past of these two persons – find themselves in the right to close the streets to other people³⁶.

Departing from these diasporic examples in and outside of Africa, I capture that experience of urban development and exclusion of poor and black people at contemporary urban centers as global processes that affect developed countries, such as in “City of Quartz” and other cases, as well as the developing countries. More striking is the fact that places like Porto Alegre’s *vilas*, urban informal spaces, squatters and *papeleiros* all over the world are becoming more common than planners, politicians and multilateral agencies could probably imagine. As common global phenomenon and more present than the planners could foresee, poverty and exclusion of black people in particular is also building a common – and globalized – experience of exclusion of people in the Diaspora. If exclusion is creating a common experience, it is also creating a common way of sharing these common experiences and of creating international networks

³⁶ Teresa Caldeira (2002) refers to similar cases in the city of São Paulo, where the elite also illegally closed public streets to “protect” their gated communities. Roy (2005: 149) also points to the elite informality that “enjoy premium infrastructure and guaranteed security of tenure”.

collaborating with each other (Vargas, 2003). In this sense it is also possible to recognize that if diasporic processes exclude Black people, they also build (common) political struggles against these exclusionary processes.

Finally, I also witnessed that these common processes of exclusion throughout the African Diaspora can re-unite African-descendent people in circumstances that some would call “resistance”. I am referring to the singular – even diasporic – identities that Stuart Hall (2003) discussed and that I consider, on one hand as transgressive and on the other hand as accommodating. For the case of the black families that are the dwellers of the EC, and other places in the Diaspora, the state of exclusion is such that the alternatives are all transgressive (as I mentioned above about pushing the pull carts through out big avenues, when these spaces should remain for modern vehicles). Squatting by itself displays a transgressive attitude, and these people have been historically doing it – being removed and becoming squatters. It is not clear how much these processes are leading to a revolution in the urban centers. Even how powerful these tendencies are (Hall 1999: 17), or if they are only defending rights, contesting or confronting the politics (Bayat 1997). However some events are already pointing towards these signals. The uprisings that happened in Paris at the beginning of 2006 are only one recent example. I also would quote the reactions of groups such as the P.C.C. in the city of São Paulo, that even if it related to drug trafficking, was very precise in its actions, attacking first the police headquarters, and then national and international Banks. Even if I do not applaud these actions, they make me think

the future of urban centers will not be this constant struggle and reactions of the “hills”, the peripheral spaces, the *favelas* and the *vilas*.

To conclude, I have to underline my positionality within these struggles. Because I am a second generation Afro-descendent person and not a visibly Black woman, my friends and companions of the Black movement and the communities that I have been collaborating with, as the rest of the Brazilian society, do not consider me a “Black” person, even if, more important to me, I am seen as an ally of the Black community. In my work as a professor in Porto Alegre, I claimed my Black ascendancy and my students would also question me without understanding my point very well. I have received many different forms of address, including references to my visible physical non-blackness, to which I always responded with a sort of joke about being referred to as a white woman: “*My hair and my skin color are one of the results of the politics of the branqueamento [whitening] of my country*”.

Many years later during my visit to Luanda and Maputo, I also realized that in these countries I was seen like a “colonizer”, since many mixed-race people that I saw there and that are descendents of the Portuguese colonizers have the same complexions. When I arrived here in the United States, I also noticed that for my black colleagues I was not Black enough, and for my white colleagues I was not white enough. I ended up being situated by my linguistics “abilities”, meaning *Portuñol*, and being identified more as a Latina, even if it was the first time for me to be defined that way³⁷. These different ways of representing and

³⁷ In Brazil, probably until President Lula, we were not taught to think of ourselves as “Latinos”. Particularly, my identity was related to the Spanish speaker world only because I was born at the

thinking about me, seeing me as a non-black person, the “colonizer” (my own version for non-Black), and as a Latino woman, at the same time that I position myself as an Afro-descendent woman who is committed to the struggles of Black people, summarizes my identity as one within these construction processes built by different people and their different nationalities as well as their own positions.

In the EC, I was also mistaken by one of the public servants of the city hall, to which I always had to explain my place – a researcher from the university. If on one hand, I identify myself and see the black families of the EC in terms of our common ancestry, which makes me feel more familiar within them, on the other hand our different class position was clearly defined and marked. Even if my history in Porto Alegre before I came to Austin was in the old *Colônia Africana*, the *African Colony* that I knew is one that belongs already to the white middle-classes. I could not pretend that I did not have the privileges of being educated, earning a middle-class salary, having piped water, electricity and a sewer system, and that these were obvious marks between me and that population, not to mention my “cement” and “regular” house. More remarkably disparate was when someone asked me about where I lived and I answered the question. For me this was also a profound mark of our difference, since they would respond with a

border with Uruguay and grew up within this border culture. Even the person at the social security bureau here in Austin responded to my question about what to check on the forms since they did not have the race/ethnicity category that I was looking for (Afro-Brazilian, since there was Afro-American): “Where are you from? From Brazil. Where is Brazil? In South America. So, you are a Latina. Sir, I can be an Afro-Latina but Latina is not enough. Who is considered Latino here? People who speak Spanish. See? I don’t! Ma’am, please check Latino. It’s going to be better and easier for you here in the U.S.” I do not understand yet why it was supposed to be better for me, even if I see it being better for the SS bureau’s classifications. That is how I increased the rates of Latino population immigrating to the U.S. and gained another identity.

“wow!”, when hearing that I was living – during my fieldwork – in two different areas: first in downtown and later in another white middle-class area (in Porto Alegre, what is not a lower class neighborhood, those old black areas that I described, or peripheral areas, is white). The downtown of the city was easier to locate and there I often met many dwellers of the EC with their pushcarts, and the other neighborhood was even closer to the EC but sometimes they could not locate it, although I would also meet some of them there. For me it seems that the fact that I was living in an apartment instead of in a house would make the difference, since for many families an apartment can sound fancier than a house.

Even if I know that all my different – disparate and privileged – positions where I live and come from make me fail in covering in depth all the complexities of living in a *vila* and being a Black person in that context, even if there are many things in this work that I did not cover either because of my incompetence to understand or because of my personal “experience” did not grasp it, what follows is encompassed by all these overlapped personal positions. I used these experiences to facilitate my conversation with the residents of the Entry of the City and tried to partially narrate and analyze them here. The following pages are a short version of my intense and precious learning process with them.

Chapter 2: *Urbanization in Porto Alegre: the vilas and*

The Entry of the City

“The racialization of the world is both the cause and consequence of modernity”. H. Winant. (The World is a Ghetto. p. 3)

In this chapter I describe the history of urbanization in Porto Alegre focusing on the genesis of the processes that I consider to be the development of racialization of people and their spaces. I describe a partial history of the urban development of the city as a way of demonstrating that Porto Alegre's birth of its urban space was based on hygienist ideas arriving from European cities. As the city developed bigger and its Black population also increased the policies that were implemented defined different modalities of spaces and their functions. Consequently, it was also defined different places for different people so that poor and Black people would be circumscribed and excluded from certain areas. I argue that the history of modernization of Porto Alegre is a history of racialization of spaces and people, specifically of Black and poor people. I aim to demonstrate this history as the origin of the process of displacement and exclusion of poor and Black people from Porto Alegre's space.

In the second part of this chapter, I describe the Entry of the City Program and the place – the Entry of the City (EC) - where the program has been implemented and developed. With this section, my goal is to present the area, its population and their economic activities. Even though the area and the *vilas* are part of the informal settlements in the city, I hope the portrait that I present here is less about their desinfrachised reality in their modest houses and living

conditions, but rather a description of the physical reality of what I consider to be racialized spaces. The material conditions of these spaces are part of the references that are used as stereotypes to allude to these people. Therefore, in this chapter I use both the descriptions of the *vilas* and the history of modernization of Porto Alegre, as the introductory connections between race and urban space which I will present in the following chapters.

Since 2001, Porto Alegre became internationally known because of the annual meeting of the World Social Forum (WSF), an international event that gathers organizations from around the world to network and build initiatives to construct and make another type of world possible³⁸. This event does not belong to any specific organization yet it is coordinated by national and international entities and its decisions are discussed by an international council formed by 128 entities from all over the world. The Forum was born from the protests by NGOs and social movements in December 1999 in Seattle against the WTO meeting. Since then, the WSF occurs at the same dates as the World Economic Forum, based in Davos, Switzerland, where the “financial, industrial, and political oligarchies of the world ... plan the destiny of capitalist globalization” (Hardt and Negri 2003: xvi). The WSF was the first event that brought Porto Alegre onto the

³⁸ “Another World is possible” is the motto of the World Social Forum. See <http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br>. In short, the WSF gather organizations that consider the globalized and neoliberal economic trends produce more inequalities, social injustices and inhumane conditions around the world. “Another world is possible” means to create alternatives for a different economic and global order.

international scene; and since then, once a year, the city turns into a stage for discussions in foreign languages about alternatives to globalization³⁹.

Porto Alegre was chosen by these international organizations because of its experience of being governed by a leftist government. In 2005 when the PT lost the elections, the first reaction from the Forum counsel was to move the event into another place. The new conservative government was considered far removed from the principles that made Porto Alegre the symbol of “another world.” Immediately after the elections, the newly elected mayor tried to guarantee the same official support that the previous administrations had given to the event. Since the elections were in November and the Forum in January, there was not enough time to change the local and the event ended happening in Porto Alegre. Despite his promises of support, the WSF counsel decided to move out since Porto Alegre no longer represented its principles. “Porto Alegre’s spirit”, represented by its democratic project in which the citizens debate and decide the priorities of the city, is the idea that made the city known as a place where “another world is possible”⁴⁰.

Porto Alegre is the last capital city on the Brazilian map for those coming from the north, and the first one for those coming from the south. Because of the MERCOSUL, a sort of trade agreement between the countries from the south, and the consequent economic and cultural integration that is been implemented

³⁹ The WSF is an event that happens in the South, counter-posing the decisions and power that occur in the North. In 2005 the Forum was in Mumbay and it is accorded that the next ones are going to be decentralized, occurring in different continents at the same time.

⁴⁰ The “participatory budgeting” is one of the most famous political instrument implemented that made the PT’s administrations successful.

between South Brazil and other southern countries from South America – the so called basin of the river of Plata - Porto Alegre is becoming the point of convergence for business, meetings, events and other activities related to this common market⁴¹. Besides these foreign neighbors, the visitors were mostly regional and national people. Consequently, people coming from Buenos Aires or Montevideo heading to the north make of Porto Alegre one of the first destinations for their arrival in Brazil.



Mapa 1: Source: Marco de Referencia do Programa. (PMPOA 2002)

⁴¹ These countries are Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay. Although Bolivia and Chile participate in some levels, their participation is still relative because of the pressures of the ALCA (Latin America Commercial Agreement) led by the U.S.

Porto Alegre, unlike other capitals like Rio de Janeiro, or Salvador, has no tourist attractions, thus it was not accustomed to receiving foreign visitors from Northern countries. In this sense, although not exactly with this intention, the WSF was the first initiative that brought foreign people to Porto Alegre's streets and that made the city to think about tourism. The PT also tried to implement policies for keeping the city on the tourist map in Brazil.

Since its founding, Porto Alegre was destined to have ties with other cities and countries, especially its' Spanish speaking neighbors. The State of Rio Grande do Sul was an area eternally disputed by Portugal and Spain. The Madrid Treaty in 1750 defined that Rio Grande do Sul, then Spanish territory, would belong to Portugal, changing both its national and local configurations. At that time, the State was interesting only because of the wild flocks of cows and horses that served as transportation of the goods extracted from the mines in the center of the country to the coast, then exported to the metropolises. After this treaty, it became important to the Portuguese to occupy the area, and so they did starting from the borders. The city of Rio Grande, a coastal city almost in the extreme south, was the first state capital, and because of its location also served as military base for protection of that part of the colony. In 1763, Spain invaded this city and the capital was immediately transferred to Viamão, a small settlement south-east of Porto Alegre, now part of the metropolitan area of the capital.

Official historiography describes the foundation of Porto Alegre as an accident. First, the State itself was seen as an area that would furnish cows, leather, meat, and horses to the center. Second, the State would be occupied only

with the intention of military defense against Spain, not exactly to be source of extraction of valuable goods like other parts of Brazil. Thus, the State was occupied by settlers who received enormous parcels of land transformed into farms, known as *sesmarias*, where they would raise cattle, horses, and produce meat, leather and *charque*, a type of dried meat, all to be sent to the center of the country. Since that time, the population of slaves used as labors in these farms was bigger than the white colonizers (Monteiro 1995).



Map 2: .Porto Alegre, the capital city of the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

Source: PMPOA (2002).

The city is located in front of a huge lake that receives from the north a discharge of six important rivers used for transportation. To the south it is linked

to a lagoon that flows to the ocean. This hydrological characteristic made Porto Alegre more important as a port than for any other purpose. Porto Alegre is the port of both entrance and departure for the merchandise produced in Rio Grande do Sul. Becoming the capital in 1773, Porto Alegre was neither the biggest city in the State nor the economically most important. The region had cities in the south and in the southeast that were more important because of the production of meat, dried meat and leather. Likewise, the cities in the north and northwest supported economic activity in agriculture – mainly wheat – that became an important product for export. Thus, it was first with animal products and wheat commerce on one hand, and, on the other, the arrival of the European immigrants and their small farms that made Porto Alegre more important economically. The State of Rio Grande do Sul became clearly divided into two distinct societies: northwards of Porto Alegre small agriculture farms predominated, held by European immigrants; southwards extensive cattle raising, run with the use of slave labor, predominated (Singer 1968).

These two economic activities marked the life of the city. Immigrants – initially Germans and then Italians – drove the commercial and later the industrial functions of the city. The Germans created the first agro-industries in Porto Alegre, buying actually products from the Italians immigrants. At the beginning of the twenty Century, these entrepreneurs owned food industries, ship companies that controlled export and import business, banks, insurance companies, and, finally, a construction company that ended being the responsible for urbanizing parts of the prosper capital-city in order to settle more residents as well as their

companies and industries. Porto Alegre's urban evolution, similar to many others cities in Brazil, was then determined to grow according to broader economic cycles (Singer 1968). Thus, at the end of the 19th Century the city saw rapid growth due mainly to several factors: it was the administrative and political capital of the State; the port concentrated the commercial activities of the region; the presence of German and Italian immigrants in the area and their economic activities; and finally, after the abolition of the slavery the city received freed men who increased the population (Pesavento 1999: 4).

In the 19th Century, the city was kind of like a village with a couple of official buildings. Facing the river and surrounded by a wall that protected the city from any Spaniard invasion, the city had the government house, one church, the arsenal house, the port, and a small concentration of houses owned by the incipient elite (military, bureaucratic and economic) surrounded by both slaves and freed men. Outside of the walls were the places for small farms that furnished vegetables, fruits, milk and wheat, both for export and internal consumption. If the 19th Century was the consolidation of the village as a city, it was also the consolidation of the bourgeois order in the city. At the end of the Century, the city had a theater and a "opera house", it had also a company for distributing water for some residences and public fountains, garbage service in a few areas, a rudimentary telephone service, a new public market, as well as a couple of squares that the bourgeoisie utilized as leisure spaces (Monteiro 1995: 31).

At the beginning of the 20th Century, the new republican trends brought together the abolition of the slavery and the growth of the urban middle classes.

Porto Alegre's authorities decided that the city had to modernize along with the nation. This decision was due to both international and national processes. The first World War brought an increment in the demand of national products as well as the growth of national industries, with the city of São Paulo being the leader of this process (Singer 1968; Souza and Muller 1997). Modernizing implied "cleansing", opening, and "civilizing" the spaces of the city that were considered disordered according to bourgeois expectations⁴². The reforms that were made targeted the central area, specially the port and the public market, increasing the places of influx of merchandise. Also, some areas then considered peripheries received new streets, as the bourgeoisie sought to establish contact with other areas of the state as well as of country. *Navegantes*, one of the neighborhoods that is part of the Entry of the City was born from this new urbanizing strategy. Urbanization here accomplished two goals: first, to guarantee the infra-structure for the new industries settling in this area; second, to facilitate a land-contact between Porto Alegre and the immigrant colonies settled in what is now Porto Alegre's metropolitan area (Souza and Muller 1997).

The first urbanizing plan was implemented in 1914. It was called *Plano de Melhoramentos* (The Plan of Improvement) and consisted basically of improving the structure of the roads, opening the city and connecting the central area to others that, as *Navegantes*, were considered peripheral to the city. Additionally, a set of buildings in the downtown area were built to house the activities of the elite. Following the examples of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo,

⁴² These processes of "cleansing", disciplining and ordering the cities seeking an European model was described by Chaloub (1986; 1996), Mead (1997), and Rago (1985; 1991).

Porto Alegre gained a public library, refined cafés, shops, and museums—all spaces where the elite could meet and socialize. Also, paved streets, public gardens, clubs and theatres were places where the signs and distinctions of bourgeois life could be on public display (Monteiro 1995).

The history of Black people in Porto Alegre is linked to both the history of slavery and the capitalist development in Brazil, both of which directly affected the way that urban spaces developed. In the 19th Century, the main economic activity of the state of Rio Grande do Sul was the production of dried meat (*charque*), exported to both the center and the northeast of the country and based in slave labor (Cardoso 1977). In the second half of the 19th Century and simultaneous to the abolition movements, the State increased its position relative to the rest of the nation in terms of the number of enslaved men laboring in the area because of the increased production in the *charqueadas*. This situation of relative wealth did not last very long, however, as this economic activity employed only Black people. At the end of that Century it was difficult to compete with the neighbors from the Plata river (Uruguay and Argentina) since they were incrementing their production by inserting themselves in the capitalist labor relationships – paid labor – as well as in the increasing mechanical production of the salt-cured meat. In addition to the high number of slaves they had to maintain in the fields, the producers had to compete their laborers externally and internally with others economic sectors in Brazil, such as the coffee producers in the State of Sao Paulo, which “imported” slaves from Rio

Grande do Sul, after the prohibition of the traffic, in 1850 (Cardoso 1977; Pesavento 1989; Singer 1968).

The strong presence of slaves in the State also brought to its history constant insurrections (Maestri 1984; Maestri 2001; Pesavento 1989). Many slaves escaped to Uruguay where they could find paid jobs. Besides this, there was also the existence of *quilombos* and the attempts to eliminate these places, as mentioned in the historiography (see especially Maestri 2001). Those who did not flee to neighboring countries nor to the *quilombos* chose the urban centers as their destination. Thus, Porto Alegre was one of the destinations of these persons who had escaped living the field, since they could find either a job or some “safe space” with others in the same situation. At the turn of the Century, Porto Alegre had almost 100.000 inhabitants and if its economy could hold distinct activities, this was not true for its population, especially for its Black population.

The new republican order brought the necessity of modernizing the labor relationships. Labor was becoming free and paid which implied the necessity of regulating the relationship that workers had with their employers. Thus, all changes that were happening in the political and economic structure were reflected in the way that the new agents of this order were seen. In other words, common people -- and the places where they had their lives - were focused and targeted in order to accomplish the establishment of the new order. Therefore, cities, especially the relationships that happened there, became the first focus for the implementation of the new order. Black people became the most targeted population because of the obvious changes that the new order brought to them and

to their work. For the white elite, Blacks' move from slavery to freedom missed the point: in their eyes, this population existed for the sole purpose of working. Likely, moving from the field to the city gave rise to a new problem of how to control these people in order to keep them in their "place". This was not something that could simply be left alone. Next section, I describe the impacts of this new order for Black people in their new spaces in Porto Alegre.

PORTO ALEGRE AND THE SPACES OF BLACK PEOPLE

For the white elite, Black workers, besides being their natural enemies, would only work when forced and punished (Cardoso 1977: 230). According to Cardoso, freed men in urban spaces had either to prove they were able to carry out the civilizational challenge or they had to subsist in a new political order in which the culture and the ideology had not changed at all to accommodate their freed status. The first option was conceded by adjusting themselves to the dominant rules of the white elite, which meant either accepting inequalities as "natural", thus incorporating the whitening ideal, or, the second option was to react to the false norms that were emerging. The latter stance resulted in criticisms and counter-reactions expressed in different instances⁴³. Therefore, Brazilian urban centers, as many historians have discussed, meant for Black people both agony

⁴³ In 1872, sixteen years before the abolition, Porto Alegre had already its first cultural society called "Floresta Aurora", created by freed men. Although intermittent because of financial and political matters, Black abolitionist newspapers were also published in different cities of the state (O Exemplo (1892-1930) in Porto Alegre; A Cruzada (1905) and A Alvorada (1907) in Pelotas; A Navalha in Santana do Livramento (1931), and A Revolta (1925) in Bagé were some of them (Mello 1995). The presence of Black people in catholic sisterhoods was not only a way of participating in the society but also being more acceptable. Besides worshiping, these were places of resistance and in where Black consciousness was built.

and as well as the possibility of finding protection among others in the same circumstances (Chalhoub 1990; Pesavento 1989).

In the cities, Black workers were employed mainly in two different activities: as domestic servants; and in handcraft activities such as ironsmiths, stonemasons, shoemakers, tailor, etc (Cardoso 1977). There was a group of men employed as carriers in the port, as newspapers sellers and as farmers. Women would work as street vendors, selling food, sweets and newspapers. Besides that, they would also work as domestic servants in different tasks from the bedroom to the kitchen even though many of them did not know how to cook in the manner expected by the white families for whom they worked. Here resides the origin of the Brazilian racist association of Black women and kitchen, generated by terror and whipping (Bernd and Bakos 1991: 59). Also interesting to point out, in the Census of 1872 in Rio Grande do Sul⁴⁴, out of 68 thousand total slaves, 12 thousands were considered jobless, though still slaves. The existence of this account registers already the fear among whites of the vices, vagabondage, and general danger attributed to Blacks that made them a threat to the new order.

In talking with Afro-descendants in Porto Alegre it is common to hear references to certain places that constitute the memory of Black people in the city. These were places known as *ilhota* (small island) and *Areal da Baronesa* (the dunes of the baroness) in the *Cidade Baixa* (Low City) and *Colônia Africana* (African Colony)—the last one being literally a satire of the State's then newly

⁴⁴ *In*: Cardoso (1977: 79).

settled German and Italian colonies (Pesavento 1999:12)⁴⁵. These places were also known because of the activities that took place there, i.e., the practice of afro-Brazilians religions, social and cultural events like carnival, or even small gatherings for playing and dancing *samba*. Recent historiography shows that these places were known and described as “damned places” (Pesavento 1995; Pesavento 1999), “dangerous places” that belonged to the “marginalia”, places of “witchcraft”, “bandits” and as “the kingdom of the crime” (Mattos 2000), amongst other adjectives. They were also named according to the stigma that pursued these places, like the case of *emboscadas* (ambushes), an area filled with trees and all sort of vegetations, into where Blacks used to run away to hide of the police and of the *capitão do mato* (the overseers). At the end, they could also be recognized as Black territories that became urban *quilombos* (Rolnik 1989), originally rural communities formed by Blacks for escaping from slavery, which also became refuges for some indigenous and poor white people. The *quilombos* helped to create new societies and spaces of resistance to the white social order. For a long time, these places were stigmatized by discourses, emitted either by institutions or by newspapers, which were the voices clamoring for “reforms” meaning the strict control of these “dangerous classes” (Bernd and Bakos 1991; Chalhoub 1986; Mauch 1994).

In Porto Alegre, these Black territories were especially stigmatized because of their inhabitants. Pesavento (1995) relates these stigmas with the

⁴⁵ The historiography tells about other minor spaces where Black people used to refuge themselves like the *rua dos pretos forros* (freed Blacks street) and others, all of them located, at that time, out of the urbanized areas.

process of urbanization and consequent whitening of the city, for which the white elite believed Blacks were not prepared. Similar to the contemporary processes of urbanization in Brazil, in Latin America, and in underdeveloped countries in general, economic growth brought together exclusion and marginalization (Gilbert 1994; Kowarick 1975; 1980). As I have been accentuating, in the Brazilian case, the end 19th Century was marked by both the new republican order and by the abolition of the slavery and urban centers were the setting in which these changes were happening. Thus, in urbanizing Porto Alegre's downtown – or its first occupied area nearby the port -- the city witnessed a process of re-locating the poverty and who else represented this reality. This is how the *Colônia Africana (the Black Colony)* and the other places were occupied in Porto Alegre.

Regulating the spaces was the first target of modernization order. Defining what was urban and what was suburban, for example, was one decision that was taken. Transforming the space, “from village into city” was the goal of the local government at that time. Cleaning the streets, creating trash depositories, building an electricity plant and with it, implementing electric street trolleys, were some of the modernizing actions in the city (Bakos 1996; Bakos 1994). Finally, a new urbanizing plan was elaborated whose implementation began in 1914. The downtown area was the first one to be affected. The population who lived there finally had to move out. High taxes obligated those who could not afford them to relocate to other areas in the city. The innumerable alleys that existed became streets, open for the circulation of people and the new activities there were taking place. These changes would also keep the city free of the “bad part of the

society”: they were coded as places of vices, disorders, prostitution and transgressions of order (Mauch 1994). Of course, only certain types of people went through this regulation process, generally Blacks and poor people. This process also affected entire communities since they were inhabited by people who, for the new order, were considered equally dangerous. This was the case of *Colonia Africana* and other communities where Blacks resided. Like any other type of stigmatization process, people were judged by their physical aspect, their activities and the places where they lived (Bakos 1996; Chalhoub 1986; Mauch 1994).

The consequence of these urban changes that happened in Porto Alegre brought together the same hygienist ideas that inspired European cities in the 18th and 19th Centuries. People were evaluated by where and how they lived and danger was feared from both a moral and a biological menace. The type of houses in where Blacks and poor lived – humble and without the conditions that the authorities considered appropriate - were seen as causes of both immorality and physical threatening. The language employed by the newspapers and by the authorities revealed these concerns⁴⁶. The association between germs and vices, crime and (un)healthy locations in the city was clear in the newspapers, revealing a society impregnated by the most common racism in which Blacks were not only the different ones in a society that wanted to be European but also they were “the” threat, since all what they did and where they lived represented the antithesis of the values of dominant white bourgeois society (Mauch 1994).

⁴⁶ The influence here is obviously the positivist ideology that considered society as a biological entity, consequently a body on which it could be intervened.

The urbanization process in Porto Alegre brought together new laws concerning Blacks and poor people. These laws attempted to regulate the activities that happened in the newly urbanized areas. Unemployment was focused on first, since freed Blacks were the ones conceived as vagabonds and as naturally unsuited to work. Thus, activities like frequenting bars or small corner stores became coded as “dangerous” and were soon prohibited. In fact, the owners were primarily responsible for banning their Black and poor costumers (Bernd and Bakos 1991; Mauch 1994; Pesavento 1989). Likewise, work was another object of the new regulations. Since Black people had their work on the streets – like street vendors, carriers, and newspaper sellers, among other tasks – the new laws aimed to regulate the spaces and the time where it could happen. Besides the fact that the new places where the white elite used to amuse themselves in their leisure time could no longer have street vendors – nor beggars – standing in doorways, there was also the concern about defining what type of work was or was not decent enough for the intended environment. These new laws not only accentuated the distances between Blacks and whites but also, reinforced the discrimination of white society against Black people. If these laws, stigmatizations and attitudes targeting Blacks and the poor defined the position reserved for each in Brazilian hierarchy of the future, they also contributed to the establishment of the – peripheral - places in where Blacks and poor were determined to live in Brazilian cities.

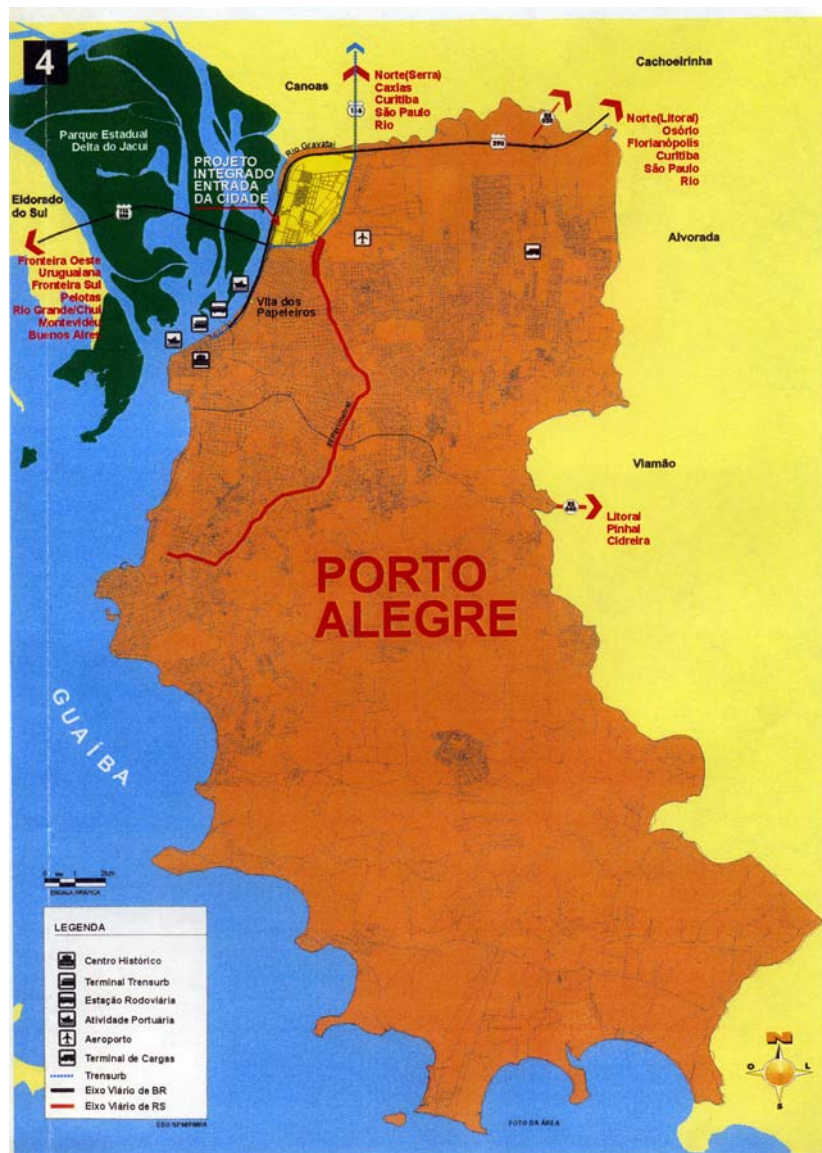
Next section, I will demonstrate what the environment of one of the present spaces where Black people live in the city. I focus on the Entry of the

City, one of these peripheral spaces where the PT is implementing the re-urbanization program. What follows is an attempt to link this previous history to the some of the contemporary spaces where Black families live, and the processes of racialization that they are exposed to.

THE ENTRY OF THE CITY (EC)

The Integrated Program Entry of the City is the name of the re-urbanization project focused on the area surrounding the entrance of the city. The area – Entry of the City (EC) - is composed by three neighborhoods: Humaitá, Navegantes, and Farrapos, divided between irregular and squatted areas and regular areas. On the map of the city that area is a very strategic one because of its location. Besides the fact that it is located at the entrance of the city, it is also near the airport, the metropolitan train, the central bus station, and only twenty minutes by bus from downtown. From the beginning of the 20th Century until the fifties, the area held a concentration of the industrial plants of the city. This fact is still marked on urban memory since many of these buildings, now empty, remain standing. Because industry is no longer the main economic activity in Porto Alegre, the area became quite inactive and residencies are now the main characteristic of the area.

Figure 3 shows the location of the Entry of the City Program (Projeto Integrado Entrada da Cidade), at the entrance of the city. It is located right next to the airport, in yellow.



Map 3: Entry of the City Program. Source: PMPOA (2002)

The following table shows the economic activities in Porto Alegre and in the metropolitan area (RMPA).

Table 1: *Economic Activities in Porto Alegre's Metropolitan area (RMPOA)⁴⁷.*

	% Primary	% Secondary	% Tertiary
RMPA	2,34	29,54	68,11
Porto Alegre	0,67	15.51	83.82

Illustration 1: Economic Activities in Porto Alegre and in the Metropolitan Area.

Economic activities in Porto Alegre's metropolitan area are as follows: 68.11% of tertiary activities (commerce and services), 29.54% of secondary activities (industries and services like distribution of energy), and 2.34% of primary activities (agriculture). The numbers characterize the city as a metropolis since the majority of its population is employed in the service sector and because the city responds to the internal and metropolitan demands of these services. In addition, the concentration in Porto Alegre of tertiary activities creates a steady flow of people traveling every day to work or to accomplish other activities in Porto Alegre.

Following the city's trends, the three zones located at the Entry of the City function also as places of both services and residencies, although in decline for many years since other areas developed faster and more intensively. The three neighborhoods are composed mainly of small commerce offices, and other big buildings such as car seller stores, inter-state and municipal bus garages, as well as warehouses. These characteristics make part of the neighborhood a fairly busy

⁴⁷ Source: National Institute of Brazilian Geography and Economic Statistic (IBGE). *In: Atlas Social da Região Metropolitana de Porto Alegre*. p. 20-21.

area during the day and a quiet one during the nights. Therefore the landscape is built of large land plots, as well as large big-box buildings, in addition to large empty spaces owned by public institutions, which were quite easy to be squatted due to the lack of occupancy and control.

The Vilas

Although *vilas* are not the primary type of places in the area, they are a substantial part of the EC. Coming from downtown and as one deviates from the main streets that go to the airport, the landscape becomes less busy and the “illegal city” starts to become evident. The EC has twenty *vilas*, some very spread out and separate from each other, others so closed that one does not notice the settlement is in fact two or three *vilas*. They received different names because of the different times that they were originally occupied. Take for instance, *vila Esperança*, which is nearby to *vila Leito da Voluntários*. Although it is not clear where one ends and the other begins, they received different names because one was inhabited later. The landscape is not homogeneous since there are several different types of construction that are all designated as *vilas*: houses made by wood leftovers; mixed constructions of wood and brick; leftovers of cardboard mixed with wood and/or plastic (these are less than the two others); and, finally, houses made only with bricks. Some *vilas* were established more than forty years ago and those are the ones which have more houses made with bricks. The more recent settlements, ten years or so, have houses mainly made by wood, which are easier to set up from one day to another without being noticed by the institutions that controls the spreading and occupation of the areas.



Figure 4: Vila Leito da Voluntarios, at the EC. Source: ZH By: Aline Goncalves.

There are also other features that characterize the *vilas*. According to the city hall they are “irregular areas” because they are inhabited by squatters. Thus, they do not have sewer system, piped water nor regular electricity. A *vila* can be recognized also by the amount of used water running on the narrow alleys and coming from the houses’ kitchens, sometimes from the bathrooms. Looking up to the houses’ roofs reveals the tangled electricity cables, which in Porto Alegre people call *gato*, cat, recalling the pet that steals any available food. The association with the pet tells us the way that people get electricity in the *vilas*: they are irregular connections, which the dwellers install borrowing from each other. Because of the demographic density of some *vilas*, and since many families

inhabit a house with only one room, many of them use a collective bathroom, installed perhaps in the middle of an exceptional empty plot, close enough to a group of families to use it. In addition to the type of (irregular) settlements that characterize the *vilas*, the City Hall also considers *vilas* as places located in what they call “risky areas” including those: close to busy streets or roads; near waterways or sewers, where water frequently overflows; and especially the type of home that can, for whatever reason and like the city hall says, be located in a “vulnerable social situation” for the lives of the dwellers. Although not all houses match this description, at a certain level many of them will have a risky component.

The results of the diagnosis of the Entry of the City made by the city hall pointed to the houses occupied in this way as a percentage of the total occupancy of the city as a whole (PMPOA 2002). It is possible to divide the irregular areas in the city in three big groups: group 1) neighborhoods with 11,71% to 14,86% of their total areas occupied by irregular settlements; group 2) neighborhoods with 3.52% to 6.68% of their areas with irregular settlements; and group 3) which have from 1.23% to 2.65% of their total areas occupied by *vilas*. The Entry of the City is part of the second group, thus part of a midpoint in these rates.

Papeleiros

An overview at the age of the dwellers of the area shows that around fifty percent of this population is economically active (21-63 years old) and forty-five percent are either children (0-6 years old) or young people (7-14 years old) in age of school. Only a few elders (in their sixties or more) live there. The final fact

makes me think about how these data set match with Porto Alegre's average, in which, according to the Census Bureau, the highest percentage of its population is between fifteen and fifty years old. However, when we look at the distribution of old people on the map of the city, the EC is unevenly populated by older people⁴⁸. Consequently, this data make me think that elderly people do not inhabit in the EC probably because survival in such conditions is more difficult.

In addition to the housing uncertainty, these families are evidently affected by their low income, low level of education, and consequently, low level of professional qualification. Although many of them do not work with recyclable materials, they are known in the city as *papeleiros* (ragpickers) people who collect papers on the streets, as well as any other recyclable material such as aluminum cans, glass and cardboard. Materials like copper used in telephone and electricity cables are more valuable and, because it is not available in the trash, some people steal this material from the light-posts and public phones. Consequently, it is common to see both damaged because of the cables' economic value. Likewise, it is common see people burning these cables around the *vilas*, in order to get rid of the plastic cover and to melt them into a heavier quantity. Sadly, this practice causes many blazes which spread very easily over the surrounding mixture of paper, plastic and wood houses, in the salvage yard. Only in the last year, the same *vila* caught on fire twice, each time leaving at least 150 families unsheltered. Although many families do work with recyclable papers and

⁴⁸ (Neves, et al. 2003: 84-87)

other materials, the word *papeleiro*, as well as *vileiro*⁴⁹, is very debasing, since it implies poverty and scarcity, and it connotes a job that is seen as a type of leftover. People seemed to be *papeleiros* not by choice, but because it is their sole opportunity for income. Of course, and as it happens in many other social spheres, there are honest and reputable *papeleiros*, as well as dishonest ones.

Yet, being *papeleiro* does not mean in no way being thief, like part of the city's and of Brazilian racialized thought considers them to be. Many families are also employed in different jobs. Men are commonly employed in construction activities and can be workers of some industry. And a few of them run their own business like a small corner store, auto mechanic shops or house appliance workshops. Most of the *papeleiro* families work hard the whole day, pulling their carts through out the streets of the city, looking for these precious dejects. They also carry their kids with them, who, as soon as they can walk and discern the materials, are also employed in this job. It is not uncommon to see seven, eight years old kids pulling the carts and helping their parents. Some families also have a very dear assistance in the form of a horse. With a cart horse, they go faster and carry much more weight. Depending on how do they move in their work, they can make more or less money, and at the end of the day they can have something about RS\$ 10 (US\$ 3.3 approximately). The housing program that has been developed in the EC is designed for families that earn no more than 5 minimum wages, which in Brazil, in 2001 was RS\$ 151.00, approximately US\$ 70.00. At the end of the day, the journey continues, as the families have to separate what

⁴⁹ Literally, inhabitants of a *vila*.

they collected. Newspapers on one pile, cardboards on another one, and cans in a third one, crumpled so they take up less space and can be placed in a big and single bundle.

Working with recyclable materials creates conditions that combine working and living everyday with others' dejected residues. Therefore, these salvage yards, gardens and other spaces are filled up with rests of papers, plastic and aluminum. When these people are not associated with any other depository or to a coop it is common to see the whole family sitting down in the yard and occupied in the activity of separating these materials, selecting one by one. It is not always that the leftovers are discarded, thus the gardens and yards often can be busy, which creates an appropriate habitat for roaches, rats, spiders and sometimes scorpions.

The structure of this work is every so often complicated, since many families work for other people, the so called "bosses". These are the owners of the pull carts, occasionally of the horses and frequently of the depositories. The bosses are in fact part of a large structure of exploitation of the workers and their families in that area. They mediate the vending of the recyclable material, paying less of the real value of the material and thereby profiting on the transactions. Frequently they are also the owners of the houses, and *papeleiro* families end up paying rent with their work. In the first blaze that happened when I was present, the social workers from the DEMHAB immediately went to the area to review their list of which registered house had caught on fire. My surprise was two white men unpleasantly complaining about the four or five houses that they had lost in

that fire. I could not understand very well what the conversation was about and later on the social workers explained to me that they had illegal properties that they rented. When I asked if there was not any legal recourse against them, I discovered that the whole area was illegal and doing something against them meant to do something against the twenty *vilas* and their dwellers. This is a theme that goes beyond this dissertation and concerns clearly a study focused on the legal structure of land and properties in the cities in Brazil⁵⁰.

Hence, some of those families are tied up in a continued and sad cycle of exploitation. These men often are associated with old power structures that ran the city government in the past and are still periodically having parties and events in the *vila* with politicians from other parties who are in the city council. One of these owners had a grocery store in a corner of the area, whose exorbitant prices shocked me. We saw him encouraging a very young family to build their house in one of the areas from where one house had been demolished, after the removal of a group of families to the new condominium. Clearly, he was saying that the area belonged to him and anybody could build there because he was giving consent. The social workers told him that the whole *vila* belonged to the city hall and nobody could build anything there after the removals. As that young man defiantly started to build his house in front of the social workers, the policemen were called. Upon arrival, they apprehended the wood, as well as the roof

⁵⁰ James Holston analyzed the complexities of the law in Brazil, pointing to how “fraudulent transactions” persist despite the existence of the law, that he considers to be “an accomplice, not a deterrent” of these illegal practices (Holston 1991; 1991a). Alsayyad (1993) also call the attention to the fact that, in the Middle East, the authorities may eventually see practices like squatting joined by other illegalities and consider them acceptable, not because they think so, but because of the intricacies of the (informal) processes.

covering, and the owner was reported to both the city hall and the police. What seems to be a favor for a family would be transformed in a chain of pressure and duties. Equally, it has to be said that the family had to stay in their unsteady situation, co-inhabiting with another family, since they did not have any other place to stay.

The re-urbanization Project: the Integrated Program of the Entry of the City (PIEC)

A change in the history of urbanization in Porto Alegre began to happen in 1989, when the PT, the Workers Party, was elected to run the city's government. In many different ways, these administrations improved on their forebears, a fact borne out by the PT's four election victories for mayoralty. The PT is a political party that grew from organized labor and grassroots movements during and after military dictatorship (1964-1985). Hallmarks of PT politics have been a commitment to democracy and social justice. As a local citizen and a voter for the PT, I consider the four *popular administrations* in Porto Alegre have been successful because of different reasons: the transparency in the way of managing public resources; its commitment to improve the lives of poor and excluded people, while negotiating benefits with entrepreneurs, bourgeoisie and other more privileged sectors of the city in an effort to administrate the city democratically and decently; and also because of the innovative system called *Participatory Budgeting* (Orçamento Participativo, henceforth **OP**), a political system for taking decisions and breaking the authoritarian tradition of public policies. The system

consists of citizens' assemblies that vote and decide for demands and priorities to be implemented in the sixteen municipal zones⁵¹.

The OP was not easily assimilated in the city political scene, since the way that it is organized takes from the city council members the maximum power to legislate about the budget of the city. Because the executive submits a budget whose priorities was already decided by the citizen's assemblies, the legislators can approve, change or reject it. However, and for the obvious reasons, the legislators felt excluded from their job because, in the end, "people" (o povo) was doing what they were supposed to do. In one hand the OP became known and seen by international organizations like the U.N. as an important mechanism of promoting a transparent and democrat politics. In the other hand, if the opposition parties recognize the popularity of the system, they do not stop criticizing it, calling the **OP** "populist", "totalitarian", and abusively against the constitutional order (Tavares, et al. 2000). The opposition parties also used the EC's area to criticize the PT because the administration was "ignoring" the increasing and expansion of what they called "*o favelão do PT*" (the biggest *favela* of the PT) that the popular administration decided to intervene in the area. After many attempts and different projects, it was also based on the demands of the popular assemblies of that OP's zone that, in 2000, the Entry of the City Program started to be planned and implemented.

⁵¹ See (Genro 1997b). I am simplifying my explanation about the OP, since this system is much more complex than I am describing here. My aim is not discuss it but rather to introduce it as one of the PT's improvement in the politics of the city.

The program the Entry of the City is not only a housing project. Although housing is a very important part of it, the program includes other four goals: 1) streets and roads infra-structure; 2) valorization as well recuperation of green and leisure areas; 3) generation of wage labor through professionalization classes; and 4) construction of health centers, nurseries, solid waste depositories and spaces such as computer laboratories and community meeting spaces.

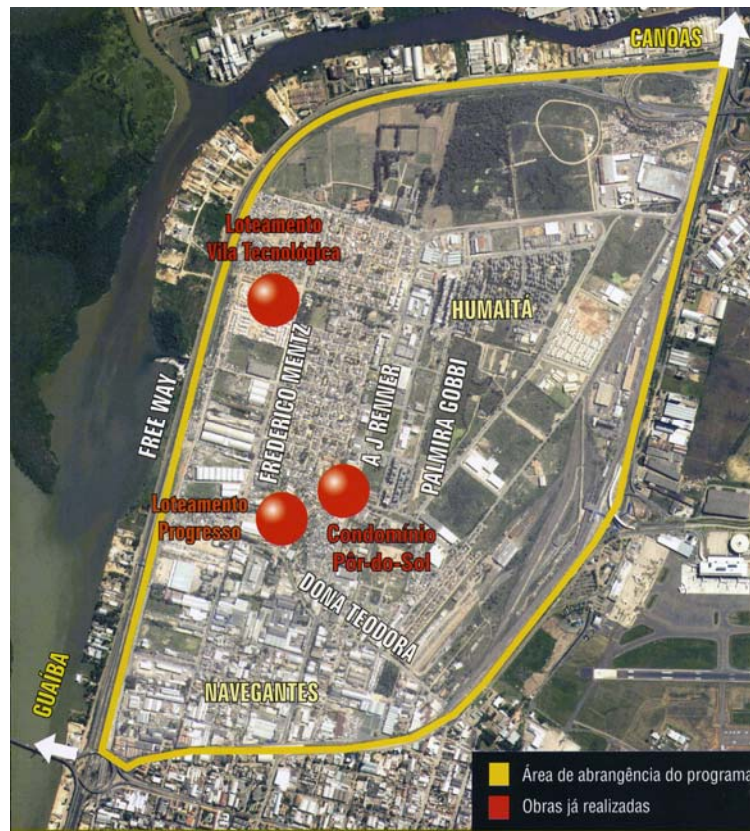


Figure 5: Entry of the City Program. Projected re-urbanized Area.*

* Yellow: Area affected. Red: housing projects already built.

Broader goals of the program include revitalization of the area, improving the road system with opening and duplication of the streets, and recuperation of the degraded areas⁵². All these objectives, on top of the housing projects themselves, were widely contested by the dwellers of the Entry of the City. Their complains were not about the content itself (the houses, the squares, or the roads), but rather their form, facades, and the possible problems that they brought to the inhabitants of the area, as I will demonstrate in the fourth chapter.

The program began its implementation in 2001 and is scheduled to be finished in 2007. The negotiations with the financial institutions and logistical decisions started earlier, then under the PT administration. Because it involves different structures and bureaucratic levels in order to be implemented, it was, in 2003, already running late. The first part of the Program that I followed affected 413 families who were re-settled into three different housing projects. The first one was at the *vila Tecnológica* (66 families - *vila Technologic*), the second one was at *Condomínio Pôr do Sol* (130 families – Sunset Condominium) and the third one was at *Condomínio Progresso* (222 families – Progress Condominium), 413 families in total⁵³. The program is a partnership between the City Hall and two other financial institutions and its total cost is US\$ 55 million dollars⁵⁴. The

⁵² (PMPOA 2003. Ano II)

⁵³ In 2003, when I arrived in Porto Alegre for my field work, the first condominium (*vila Tecnológica*) was already built and the families had already been removed into it. Although I interviewed some of those families, I only followed the moving and implementation of the two others, *Pôr do Sol* and *Progresso* and my relationship was much closer with these families than with the ones that moved to *vila Tecnológica*.

⁵⁴ Just to compare the disparities in numbers, the price of the new City Hall's building in Austin was US\$ 56 million dollars.

Inter-American Development Bank (I.D.B.) through the Federal Government is an important partner, as well as the Fondo Financiero para el Desarrollo de la Cuenca del Plata (FONPLATA) is the second and very important partner because it is responsible for fifty percent of the total cost of the program⁵⁵. The city hall complements the funds with its own resources.



Image 8: Condominio Por do Sol at the EC. Source ZH.

⁵⁵ The FONPLATA is multilateral agency formed by five countries which are part of the river of Plata's basin: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Bolivia where it is also based. Accordingly to the technicians from the city hall in personal interviews, the FONPLATA works like the IDB except that it supports smaller programs like the Entry of the City. Although supporting the Entry of the City, the IDB is more interested in programs that have a bigger impact either in the metropolitan area or in the State as a whole. Additionally, FONPLATA's requirements are easier to accomplish in the sense that, contrarily to the IDB, it is less concerned with financial returns, factor that facilitates the approval of the projects.

In a broader sense, the EC program intends to focus on different problems of that area, as well as of the city in general. In 2000 the DEMHAB (Department of Housing of the City Hall) edited a small volume called Map of the Irregular Lands in Porto Alegre⁵⁶. This document mapped the irregular areas in whole city and, by strategically locating the degraded areas in the city, worked as a landmark for the creation and development of the program for the EC. Although this edition conceives “irregular” lands as those characterized by the non-existence of legal property, then squatted areas, in praxis, the technicians understand also that the irregularity concerns the lack of urban infra-structure that comes together with the squat situation. In its full extent, the map, based on Census Bureau data from 1998, showed the existence of 464 irregular areas, or *vilas* in Porto Alegre, totalizing 73.392 houses inhabited by 287.161 people (21.11% of the population). From these, the *vilas* in the EC correspond to 4.53% of irregular settlements in the city and 40% of that part of the city (Humaitá, Navegantes and Farrapos) is living in irregular settlements; in those settlements the number of dwellers totalizes 4.48% from the irregular dwellers in the city.

Next tables illustrate the concentration of irregular areas in Porto Alegre and in the EC:

⁵⁶ (Prefeitura Municipal de Porto Alegre 2000)

Illustration 6: The Entry of the City in relation to Porto Alegre (2000).

	Porto Alegre	Entry of the City (three neighborhoods)
Total Population	1.360.000	31.964
Population living in vilas	287.161	12.872
Percentage	21.11%	40.27%

Source: IBGE quoted *in*: Programa Integrado Entrada da Cidade. Marco de Referência e Descrição do Programa. Caderno I.

The data of the Federal Census Bureau in 2000 showed the total population of Porto Alegre as well as of the three neighborhoods that make the EC (Humaitá, Navegantes and Farrapos). While 21.11% of the population of Porto Alegre lives in *vilas*, only at the Entry of the City this number unevenly concentrates 40.27 % of the area's population living in irregular areas.

Next table shows irregular areas of the EC vis-à-vis irregular areas in the whole city.

Illustration 7: Irregularity in land occupation in Porto Alegre, described by domestic units and number of inhabitants (Data of 2000).

	Porto Alegre	Entry of the City	% of the EC in Porto Alegre
Total of <i>vilas</i>	464 vilas	20 vilas	4.31 %
Domestic Units (d.u.)	73.392 d.u.	3.322 d.u.	4.53%
Inhabitants in <i>vilas</i>	287.161	12.872	4.48%

Source: Map of Irregular Lands in Porto Alegre; Programa Integrado Entrada da Cidade. Marco de Referência e Descrição do Programa. Caderno I.

In 2000, the twenty *vilas* of the EC totalized almost 4.3 percent of the population of Porto Alegre living in irregular areas. Although it is not the biggest agglomerate of irregular areas in the city, the table also shows the EC as a space with a significant amount of people, inhabited by approximately thirteen hundred people, totaling almost thirty-five hundred families and three thousand homes⁵⁷.

That area was chosen by the City Hall not only because of the irregularity of the lands, but also because of, I argue, the political implications of its location on the map of the city.

Another explanatory document of the program elucidates that, although in the entrance of the city and close to downtown, the area is segregated from the rest either by old forms of transportation conduits that blocked its accessibility or by old infra-structure works made in a past that did not contemplate the city's

⁵⁷ (Prefeitura Municipal de Porto Alegre 2002)

growth - an apparent lack of a long term urban planning of the old administrations⁵⁸. Additionally, the squatted areas transformed many of the streets into dead ends, since the houses obstruct the passages. Consequently, removing the families and their houses in order to open new roads and duplicate others is part of a planned strategy of opening it for circulation and reinserting the area into the city, since it is quite isolated, either because of the type of activities that happen there (commerce, services and few industries) and because of the lack of urban attractions such as green spaces and other leisure areas.

Conclusions

When putting the city in a larger context, Porto Alegre is the last capital city in Brazilian's map for those coming from the north, and the first one, for those coming from the south. Because of the crescent-focused economical and cultural integration that has been implemented between South Brazil and other southern countries— the so called basin of the river of Plata - Porto Alegre is becoming the point of convergence for business, meetings, and other activities. Consequently, people coming from Buenos Aires or Montevideo heading to the north make of Porto Alegre one of the first places for arrival in Brazil. Besides the foreign visitors, anyone that comes into the capital of the State passes through the area. Once more, the city hall considers that, because of the location at the entrance of the city, the concentration of irregular areas at the entrance tells a history that does not correspond to the idealized pattern of the city.

⁵⁸ (Prefeitura Municipal de Porto Alegre 2002)

In addition to their own economic interests, the city hall seemed to be concerned with the state of poverty of those families, since the social indexes over there are much lower than the ones of the average of the city. In one hand, it is true that the Entry of the City Program was motivated by the demands and decisions that the population took in the assemblies of the OP. In the other hand, it is also true that the PT decided to re-urbanize and to regularize that area based on different reasons: the demands of the population and the population's state of poverty and the negative visual impacts of the area right in the entrance of the city are the PT's arguments. In addition, I argue, there were political reasons: the pressure of the other parties as well as the impact of that area over the PT's image. I understand that the Entry of the City Program is a gigantic re-urbanization project that yields advantageous results to both, the population AND the PT. With this, I argue that the PT does it because first it is guided by its social justice politics and second, the PT's public image benefits from this type of investment. Therefore, the politics of space that has been implemented there, despite its well intentioned response to the demands of the OP's participants, is anchored on the PT's political gains. I will demonstrate it in more details with other cases in chapter three.

In re-urbanizing the entrance of the city the PT is part of the history of the processes of urbanization in Porto Alegre. This history, I demonstrated, was marked by the transformation of the city's public spaces into more homogenous landscape to the bourgeois' expectations. It involved displacement of poor and Black families to the edges of the city because images of "crime", "danger",

“threaten”, and “disease”, among others, were associated with the precariousness of the “real life”. Unemployment and social exclusion, all results of the processes of the recent modernity, were considered to be inherent to the (“dangerous”) working- (and unemployed) classes (Chevalier 1973). This moral set of stereotypes about these families accompanied these interventions on the space.

The changes in the city were obligatory measures taken by the authorities aiming to be part of the “modernity”. If these changes did transformed the city’s space introducing to it a modern shape for living, it also displaced and removed poor and Black people, and the masses were confined far away of what was considered livable spaces. Interestingly, these were similarly described by Davis (1990:232-236) as post-modern processes whose policies created “sadistic street environments” against poor people in Los Angeles. I argue with Winant (2001), that these are part of the modernity’s history. In Porto Alegre, the results of these processes determined the future of the citizenship in the city. At the present time, the projects for citizenship of the PT are circumscribed by the place that history reserved for poor and Black people, those that, in Porto Alegre, were already marked by the notions of the ideal citizen defined since the foundation of the city.

Chapter 3: *Historical Continuities*

“When we tried to get a sewage system put in, they refused to extend the pipes to our community. Can you imagine that? They didn’t even want the feces of the rich to be contaminated by the feces of the poor!” Benedita da Silva*.

In this chapter I discuss the construction of racialized spaces, or the role that race plays in the spaces where people live. I aim to scrutinize how space is a metaphor for race and how this metaphor is materialized in space, and consequently, the roles that race play in defining the geography of urban space (Gregory 1998; Keith 1993a: 29; Oliver and Shapiro 1995; Smith 1993; Sugrue 1996). My main sources used here are my interviews with public servants, official documents used in negotiations with the PIEC’s subsidizers, as well as reports elaborated for both the City Hall and varied financial institutions. I use leaflets, newsletters and related printed materials that were distributed to the residents of the EC. In addition, I use excerpts of my master’s thesis (Pólvora 1994) to draw historical connections between the present racialization of people and spaces in Porto Alegre. I include the example of the Silva family, dwellers of an old Black neighborhood in the city, as a paradigm of how space can be materialized into racist disputes and conversely, how race can be used as point of accusation and to de-legitimate the space. With this example, I aim to demonstrate the persistency of racist common senses in Porto Alegre that, in this case, it appears covered by the discourse of economic inequality.

* Benedita da Silva, first Black woman in Brazil to be elected for the PT for the senate and for vice-governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, telling about her life in the favela *Chapéu da Mangueira*, city of Rio de Janeiro. *In:* (Benjamin and Mendonça 1997: 41).

I analyze documents, interviews and conversations looking for the expressions of the racialization processes of people and spaces. These are processes of moral construction built through the use of both images and representations, specifically those of negative content that are evident in the ethnographic data that I analyzed. These images are “abstracted from the living conditions of people” (Smith 1993: 129) and applied to the space where they live “as an index of attitudes, values, behavioral inclinations and social norms” (*ibid*: 133). In contemporary cities, this set of images applies to both immigrants, different racial and ethnic groups and to a generalized state of poverty. These images also represent racialized common senses about Black people.

THE CASE OF MONT SERRAT: WHERE RACE INTERSECTS WITH PLACE AND CLASS

While doing my master’s research (Pólvora 1994), my godmother Mãe Lina showed me a letter from the City Hall in which it stated she had to pay her house’s taxes. Mãe Lina did not understand what was happening and asked me to help her. I went to the City Hall’s financial office and the staff confirmed that Mãe Lina owed money in taxes. I was impressed by the unpaid amount however the staff explained that the charge was not that bad, considering the location of the house. Mãe Lina told me that she was giving the tax money to one of her grandsons and we realized that he had not paid the taxes in the past four years. Following the recommendation of the staff I told Mãe Lina not to worry because we would find a solution. It ended up that, at the age of 83, Mãe Lina passed away and the problem of the due money became the problem of her family recipients.

Nowadays the house is rented and functions as a *cortiço*, like many others in big Brazilian cities during the early 20th Century⁵⁹. I believe that the recipients will not have the money to pay the debt, and that eventually the house will be sold, along with its debts, to a major construction company and replaced by an expansive building, which is the current trend in Mont Serrat.

Mãe Lina, as well as her sisters and brothers, was born in Mont Serrat, a neighborhood considered part of the *Colônia Africana*. Her father was the owner of a sizeable plot of land where he planted vegetables for sustaining his family and sell to the neighbors. Her mother worked as a cook in an American private school. Although the school was close to her house, Mãe Lina told me that her mother only came back home on Sundays because she was required the rest of the week. One of her brothers continues to live in the same neighborhood in a house he owns. In walking through the neighborhood it is possible to identify the oldest houses, mainly wood, in where few Black families still reside. However, his situation configures an exception, since most of the Black families that lived in Mont Serrat had to move out and had to sell their properties. In Porto Alegre, Black families who have a long history in the city, have a connection with this

⁵⁹ At the beginning of the 20th century, *cortiços* were popular “tenements occupied by workers and unemployed families who could not afford to own a home, even through auto-construction” (Caldeira 2000: 14). These houses were divided into rooms of different sizes, depending on the type of building, location and/or how many people lived there. Since there was usually only one bathroom and kitchen, the dwellers shared these spaces, the bedrooms and sometimes a living room. These houses were the predecessors to the present day favelas. Considered by the local

neighborhood. Presently, most of them live in the peripheral areas of Porto Alegre. The case of Mãe Lina is just one example of the conditions of Black people who, after the abolition of the slavery gained their freedom but had neither the rights nor the (financial) conditions to remain in areas like Mont Serrat.

Another example is the case of the Silva family. Since the 1970s, Mont Serrat witnessed a judicial demand led by a Black family known as the Silvas, who inhabits an area located in the heart of the neighborhood. Surrounded by huge and fancy buildings, the Silvas live in a straight plot whose total area is four thousand square meters. The Silvas recall living there for the past sixty years and as the neighborhood became more inhabited and gentrified the obstacles for their permanence increased. The owners of the surrounding areas, predominantly white families and construction companies, persistently used different methods to try and remove the Silvas. Yet, the Silvas have been struggling to prove their right to live in the area as the earliest dwellers.

There is a relative awareness among Porto Alegre's population that the struggle has racial connotations. Within local common sense the history of the city is ignored and there is seemingly no explanation for how a Black family can inhabit such a fancy and expansive neighborhood. Brazilian cities purposely keep a short memory about their spaces and inhabitants, so that Mont Serrat's new dwellers ignore the history of that neighborhood which contains solid elements of

authorities as dangerous, unhealthy and conducive to vices, cortiços were torn down and their dwellers relocated either to another area or to other improvised housing.

Black presence and ancestry. Thus, veiling the history of the neighborhood is, on one hand, a strategy for pretending that the neighborhood was “discovered” only recently, with the new urban investments. And, on the other hand, ignoring the history of Black people in the area also provides an argument to legitimate the current eviction processes of which, the Silvas’ case is emblematic. Like the history of the “discovery” and of the colonial occupation of the Americas, when the colonial elites ignored the native presence and converted the space into a source for supplying their colonial needs, the recent occupation of Mont Serrat and other urban land in Brazilian cities makes *tabula rasa* of the space, excluding the “undesirable ones” and in doing so, determining who is meant to last (Sibley 1995: xi).

Public Policies that spatialize race and racialize the space

The displacement of Black people in urban Brazilian centers is neither a new nor a contemporary phenomenon. It is part of a constitutive element of Brazilian urban development impetrated by different sectors of the society as well as their spectrum of control. It occurs under varied justifications and arguments yet the modernization of the cities is the main one. Cities like Rio de Janeiro (Carvalho 1987; Chalhoub 1986; Meade 1997) and São Paulo (Andrews 1991; Rolnik 1988), both representative of the aspired modernity in the country, are emblematic of the same process led by local industrial and political elite, as well as the bourgeoisie who conducted their politics in the city. As I suggested in the previous chapter, in Porto Alegre, similar processes happened and ended up re-

creating neighborhoods and segregated areas of the city where displacement, cleansing, and remodeling are the most salient results.

The case of the Silvas

The case of the Silva family is illustrative of a key discussion in Brazil, whether discrimination is based on race or in class. As I introduced earlier, the Silvas, a poor, Black family, live in a very affluent area – Mont Serrat, formerly known as *Colônia Africana* (African Colony), which has increasingly being transformed by gated communities, private security guards and electronic systems, since the nineties. The neighborhood has changed so much that it became more representative of fortified enclaves in the city than as a place associated with Black families; only older generations make this historic connection with Mont Serrat⁶⁰. The fact that there is a dispute over the rights of the Silva family to live there – a dispute that many other Black families could have led - presents an example of how racism is covered by different arguments and mainly it is said to be a class dispute, because the Silvas are a “poor” family (and not a Black one). The family has been claiming their land to be an “urban *quilombo*” and this is, at the bottom line, the last alternative to demand what could

⁶⁰ One day I took a cab heading towards Mont Serrat. The driver was a middle age Black man and he told me that he was born in that neighborhood, but now lives in Alvorada, another city in the metropolitan area. As the conversation progressed, he told me, laughing, that his colleagues – other taxi-drivers – joke about the fact that he was born in a “golden cradle” (referring to the neighborhood) but since he is Black (*negrao*) he said, he obviously could not stay living there. I told him that I knew a little bit about the history of the neighborhood and was not surprised by what he had shared with me. He then indicated that I was “the only one” who knew about the history of the neighborhood, because his friends used to laugh at him. As we reached my final destination, he told me that his colleagues actually asked him: “how can a Black guy [*negrao*] live in Mont Serrat? It could not be true”.

be simply defined as their “right”, since they have been able to prove their history on the place and the others do not.

The Silvas claimed their land in the sixties. Prior to their claim, they received offers to sell it⁶¹, threats to be forcibly removed, unscrupulous offers from lawyers offering to help them legalize the property, and various other coercive attempts to claim the property from different origins. Individuals, families and construction companies would often promulgate themselves to be the owners of the land and until the police accused the children and the women of disorder. The family has been exhorting by court orders to leave the land several times, but they have not left. Several of these times, the other parties claiming the land did not complain either, which in some sense proved a certain disinterest on their part⁶². After many years and attempts to resolve the situation by themselves, and conscious of their racial status and how it played a role in this dispute, the Silvas requested for the help of the local Black movement.

Through their engagement with the Black movement, the family changed the terms of their judicial conversations and converted their demand into a plea for the recognition of their land as an urban quilombo. This was possible due to the new constitution (1988) that, seeking to protect the rights of traditional rural communities, established that lands which could be proved to belong to the

⁶¹ These offers were made even though no legal ownership could be proved at any point during the dispute.

⁶² Although the results of the judicial disputes were against the Silvas, the complexity of the situation made it difficult to prove the other parties' ownership, so that the case had not reached a judgment. Eventually, the claimer passed away and no one else attempted to make another claim. Also, it happened that some claims asked for a land larger than that of the Silvas, which complicated the decision. Even though they lost part of their land to the construction companies that unashamedly invaded their land, they fought the process the entire time.

“remaining members of quilombos”, or *quilombolas* (also marroners), should be identified, demarcated, and given the legal property deed to the people who live on these lands. (Brazilian Federal Constitution. Decree 3.912. 09/10/2001).

Based on this law, the family Silva pioneered the demand in the country, for the recognition and legalization of the first urban quilombo in Brazil. Until that time, quilombos were identified only in rural areas. The process of recognition and legalization of a quilombo is quite complex since it attempts to recognize land that does not have a property deed. Consequently, the population has to be able to reconstruct its history on the land mainly through oral narratives combined with official maps, certificates, and any legal documents that, by chance, are available. With the help of anthropologists and historians, these documents and narratives are gathered into one single document called an “anthropological report” or anthropological finding (*laudo antropológico*), that in Brazil, is accepted as a legal document for these cases when no document is available (Carvalho and Weimer 2004). In simple terms, an anthropological report is a document that provides evidence for populations – usually indigenous people and other traditional communities - that do not have the same tools and “documents” as the dominant society.

The support of the Black movement was the turning point in the Silvas’ struggle. Different official institutions such as the Human Rights Commission of the State House of Representatives, the Citizenship and Human Rights Commission of the city hall⁶³ and the Federal Government through the Palmares

⁶³ At that time the City Hall was governed by the PT.

Foundation were the most important institutional allies and supportive forces that the Silvas had. The Palmares Foundation is associated with the Ministry of Culture and was created during Fernando Henrique Cardoso's first presidential term to "promote and preserve social, cultural and economic values coming from the Black heritage in Brazil"⁶⁴. The foundation is also responsible for officially recognizing, based on the anthropological report, that the land claimed is, in fact, a quilombo land. Once officially recognized as such, the next step is to have the local government – or authority - demarcate the land, compensate the potential losers in case they have been using the land, and to issue the property deed. The effects of the engagement of the Black movement and these institutions on the Silvas' struggle were propagated in local and national press and this publicity reduced the threats on the Silvas and helped them reach another level of negotiation. When I was last in Porto Alegre (2003) the report was officially passed to the *Palmares* Foundation, responsible for recognizing the community as an urban quilombo. Meanwhile, a new judicial plea was filed by another group of persons, who claimed the ownership of the land. While there is still no judicial answer to the plea, the land cannot be declared a traditional *quilombo*. It is up to the designated judge to decide whether they have to leave the area or not.

⁶⁴ <http://www.palmares.gov.br/> retrieved in November 11, 2005. The Palmares foundation is named after the biggest and best known quilombo (maroon community) in Brazil. Palmares existed for almost hundred years during the 16th and 17th Century. Its leader was Zumbi and the estimated population was twenty thousand escaped enslaved Black people and some indigenous people (Freitas 1973; Moura 1983). Zumbi, nowadays the symbol of Black resistance in Brazil, was killed in 1694, when the quilombo was destroyed. Lands like Palmares are the types of land that the Decree 3.912 aims to identify, recognize, and entitle the property deed to the descendants of these fighters.

Although the focus of this dissertation is not the case of this urban quilombo, the Silvas' struggle raises some important issues that have connections with the case of the Entry of the City. The Silvas' situation with their land changed over time along with the meaning of the space they occupy in the city. From dwellers of the *Colônia Africana*, they became squatters in the Mont Serrat. It is like that, the meaning attributed to their space was transformed. From the (only) space designated for Black families at the end of the 19th century, one hundred years later, it is deemed inappropriate for them. The city's politics changed not only the face of the space, but also the perception (and the decisions) of who should be the neighborhood's dwellers.

Even though the PT supports the Silvas' struggle – mainly due to the intervention of the sectors of Black movement affiliated to the party – the party sees it more as a question of poor versus rich and accepts the denomination of *quilombo* much more as a political and judicial strategy than a racial struggle. This became evident for me as my field work progressed as well as my conversations with civil servants from the City Hall. When I questioned them about the case of the *Silvas*, and purposely referred to it as a case of racism using words like “Black family” and “racism”, my answers varied from “*I do not understand this question very well*” to “*I am not in a good position to judge whether it is a case of ethnic discrimination or not*”. I had a conversation in which it became explicit the differentiation and the weight put on class and how race can be dismissed: “*I am not sure if it is a case of racism. I would say that if that family were rich, they would stay there... why not?*” This person brought the example of

Daisy Nunes, a Black woman from Porto Alegre who in the eighties became Miss Brazil and represented the country in the Miss Universe pageant. This woman, whose mother was a seamstress, became famous, married a white businessman and now has an economic status that only a few Black people attain. She has her own fashion store in one of Porto Alegre's shopping malls, and it is part of the socialite circuit. It is said that she lives in one of the fanciest neighborhoods in the city. However, I suggest that her lifestyle is the result of her double status: she was Miss Brazil and she is the wife of a rich white man. She is clearly an exception of the rule in the trajectory of Black people. When I replied to my interlocutor with this argument, he said *“well, married or not, she did it, I mean, with money I do believe that it is possible... the Silvas, if they had money, they could buy that plot and maybe built something appropriate for the neighborhood”* (field notes journal, june 2004).

The permanence of the Silvas in the ex-Colônia Africana had not been easy. First, some of the houses did not have basic urban services like paved streets, piped water or sewage. When they had water and electricity they were utilities installed by the family and, since the land is not a “legal”, they do not have an official address. The description that the current members of the family gave to the anthropologists for their report referred to a “nobody's place”(Carvalho and Weimer 2004) in the city, a place where “there was only bushes” when they arrived there. Some families gave me the same description of the EC referring to the state of the area when they first arrived In the conditions between these varied Black neighborhoods in the city, the history of the

continuity incorporate both race-based discrimination by the sparse white neighbors, and class-based discrimination, considering they all were – and still are – poor families who lived from subsistence agriculture and, in the present, from the salaries from their low-paying jobs. After the construction of the city’s first shopping mall closed to that area in the eighties, a purposeful urban development process began in the neighborhood attracting investors and consequently, producing these land disputes. Since this process began, the Silvas have struggled to remain in their home.

Due to this process, the Silvas’ case is exemplar of how race intersects with space in Porto Alegre. As a family who has lived in Mont Serrat for at least sixty years, the Silvas fight for their right to keep living in the area, both for the present and future generations, and because of the threats that urban capital, investors, developers and neighbors made to both the family and in regards to the land. The history of exclusion and segregation of these families is in fact known both in Brazilian cities and in other urban centers because of the similarities in the cases: eviction, expulsion, displacement and violent methods on the one hand, combined with increases in taxes, and the selling of properties through unscrupulous business often made by construction companies on the other hand; and these are only a few of the processes called gentrification⁶⁵, “a structural phenomenon tied to changing forms of capital accumulation and means of

⁶⁵ The recent revitalization processes in East Austin is one example, where Hispanic and Black families have been displaced to be replaced by new and expensive renovation projects. Smith (1996; 2002; Smith and Williams 1986) argues that gentrification processes inevitably bring together oppositional groups who confront the exclusionary tendencies that end up being targeted by (increasing) authoritarian practices of the state and its apparatuses.

maximizing ground rent” (Goldberg 1993: 55). Following this definition in the disputes over urban land two distinctive levels of segregation overlap; the first is insufficient financial resources (class position) requested to pay increasing taxes and the second is the racial factor that makes Black families salient. Furthermore, there is an open and uncontested racist stereotype that sees certain spaces as (in)appropriate for Black families. Mont Serrat – the old African Colony in Porto Alegre -- and the case of the Silvas are emblematic of how Blacks were and are being excluded from certain areas of the city. Moreover, the definition of specific spaces as unsuitable for “some people” and suitable for the others is the way that different levels of segregation – racial, spatial and of class – operate in the city and update the processes of racialization of the spaces.

The invisibility of race: what the City Hall sees and does not see

I argue that when the PT does not see the disparities between the poverty that affects Blacks and Euro-descendants in the EC it is because the party simply turns a blind eye to the significance of race in determining the inequalities. In the same way, the EC has been “legalized” and inserted into the “legal city” while as the re-urbanization project has been changing the shape and the façade of the area, it does not take into consideration the resistance of some neighbors to assimilate the (Black) *vileiros*, people who are considered less appropriate to live in the renovated area. In the end, the racialized common sense is manifested in both situations. In the week between Christmas and New Year of 2003, during the days of the moving out, I heard several statements coming from the neighbors of the EC rejecting some other families as neighbors:

“I am happy that we are moving but now let’s see how it is going to be there... [J: What are you worried about?] I don’t know yet who we will have as neighbors and I’m worried about it, because people say that they are mixing up everybody... people from here, people from the A.J. Renner [vila], people from the Voluntários [street] and I don’t know that people...those vileiro... I’m afraid because I know, everybody knows that there are some ‘thug people’ [barra pesada], pot smokers [maconheiro], thieves... that ‘negrada’ [filthy Blacks] ... I do not know them...and I’m afraid they won’t know how to behave in a place like that [the new housing project]” (white woman, mid 30s, housewife).

This conversation is only one and I heard many different families expressing the same concern regarding who is going to live in the new housing project and how it would be afterwards. On one hand, they expressed a regular and comprehensible concern about the new and unknown situation. On the other hand they also expressed a hierarchy that exists among the whole area as well as the notion that this hierarchy is based on class and, I argue, on race - something that the PT did not recognize. These conflicts were clearly evidenced for me in several situations when I thought the city hall was not consistent enough in approaching the crux of the matter. I present another example of similar conflict between neighbors – and between Black and non-Black people. This example was a smaller case that affected only one family. Fortunately, it ended up favoring them, yet it involved several layers of stereotypes and racialization of people.

Nica, 38 years old, is a Black woman married to a white man, a shoemaker. They lived in a very small shack, in a corner of one of the alleys. In the back of their house the land was swampy and there was nothing else but the highway, a couple of meters behind. She had been living there for ten years and had neither electricity nor water service. When I met her and her husband it was a

hot afternoon in January. They were all sitting under the shade of their home. As one of the DEMHAB's social workers and myself appeared at the corner, they immediately called us over. Her husband started to talk with the social worker, a man, and the woman immediately started to talk with me.

Taking me for a civil servant of the city hall, she asked me when they were going to move out and I said that I did not know because I did not work for the DEMHAB. We kept talking and she told me her concern regarding the commercial area that they were supposed to have. These concerns were based on the fact that her husband works as a shoemaker and he had the right to have an extra space (considered by the DEMHAB as "commercial areas" exclusively for people like him and others who run corner stores, beauty salons and any other commercial activities). Visibly upset, she told me that she knew "they" did not want them to have the commercial area. I asked her "they, who?" and she said "*they, the neighborhood commission and these people from the DEMHAB*", pointing out to the social worker. I asked why and then she gave me a big explanation. In short "they" were accusing her husband of not having his shoe workshop in the *vila*, but in Gravataí (another town in the metropolitan area).

She told me that in "this place" (the *vila*) it is impossible to work because nobody uses shoemakers to fix shoes. Laughing, she commented: "*here nobody has money to buy shoes, they don't buy or fix shoes, they wear shoes that are thrown away and when the shoes are done, they are done, it's time to pick up another one... but nobody fixes them*". That was the reason that her husband was working in this other town in another shoe repair workshop. However, she said,

they were very confident that in the new place and with the shoe workshop area, they would be able to work in their own workshop. *“We do have all the equipment here, do you want to see them? But it is hard to have a business here because nobody has money...”*. Afterwards I asked the social worker what was the issue with the shoe workshop and he told me, briefly, *“they are accused of selling ‘loló’ and shoe glue”* (both are the cheapest and most famous inhaling drugs, used especially by street children but also by many adults). I asked if he knew it was true, he said *“I don’t think so; I think it has to do with the fact that they have AIDS”*. I was surprised and asked how did he know about it? Did they ask the social workers for help or any sort of treatment? Did he hear anything from the health center? He finally said *“no, we do not know anything about it... this is gossip that goes around the vila. That’s why I think they need the commercial area.”*

This was a small case in which the social workers eventually convinced the neighborhood commission that this family should get a house with a commercial area in addition. The social workers’ argument was based on their living conditions and the importance for the social part of the project’s development. Since the family already possessed the equipment necessary for their craft and it was vital towards the maintenance of their financial source, the Program expressed a concern for the family and allowed them to make the move. In the end, I was pleased to see Nica and her family moving into a house with the commercial area. I consider that this example underlines the important role of the social workers, who are at the end of the chain and who end up with the dusty

shoes because they are walking through the *vilas*, working and talking directly with the families. The social workers were aware of the different gossips, accusations and disputes and made efforts to help the family obtain the house with the commercial area, even if they did not perceive a case like Nica's family as one that involved racism.

This set of rumors and gossips are demonstrative of how Black people – because of their racial belongingness - are stereotyped as threats, as dangerous, unworthy, and “contagious” people. In this case, they are depicted not only as drug dealers but also through the image of an infectious disease (AIDS). As attested by Browning (1998), these metaphors about Black people are not new. They are so powerful that, in this case, even the social worker believes they carry some truth. With this said, I am not arguing that the City Hall under the PT administration should be “immune” to the racialized stereotypes. On the contrary, and despite the political position of the PT, I am identifying the circulation of these stereotypes whose images and narratives that circulate in the *vila* are significant and communicable – as gossips and rumors - to those who live or go there. Fortunately, and even believing in these images, the social worker defended their right to have the commercial area in addition to their house, i. e., defended their “class-based” right, but did not recognize the association between the stereotypes and their blackness.

A different level of dispute and conflicts is the one that involves political decisions, money, and the City Hall's public image. This is the case of the second event where I consider the dubious stance on the issue held by City Hall. In this

case, the City Hall actually recognized the obvious discrimination that was involved (which I have been calling “racialization”) but they did not confront it. This second situation was a little bit more complicated because it involved more families and became Zero Hora’s headlines for a couple of weeks. The *vila dos papeleiros* is one of the oldest *vila* in the EC’s area. It is very dense area (730 people, 213 families) concentrated in 37.5 thousand square meters and is consequently impacted with regard to any further development. This high concentration of space and people equals out to an average of 3.6 people per house. The houses are mostly built by wood and salvaged materials such as plastic, or cardboard. More than fifty percent of these houses have only one room. Although 92% of the houses have electricity, only 5% have piped water inside of the houses. There is no municipal sewage system in this neighborhood.

The majority of the population works in one of four recycling depositories that belong to two or three owners. Many families depend on these “bosses” [*patrões*] not only for employment but in many cases for housing, as their houses also belong to the bosses. Furthermore, the diad of job-housing dependency is complemented by a third element: food dependency. Since the “bosses” can also sell the food, families who derive income from the depositories are kept in a triad of job-housing-food dependency. These families end up working for these two or three people in order to pay the debts they inevitably incur, which results in a clear cycle of dependency. Their monthly wage stays in the average of one minimum salary. In 2003 this salary R\$ 180,00 (at that time around US\$ 60.00, 2.00 US\$ a day). Thus, this *vila* is seen by the City Hall as one of the most

delicate cases, not only because of the living conditions, but also because the explicit slavery situation - a cycle that the DEMHAB and the City Hall want to break up.

In March of 2004 a fire destroyed two hundred houses and left six hundred people homeless, due to the amount of highly flammable material that comprises the majority of the residents' homes⁶⁶. In April of 2005, another fire destroyed 35 houses and left 140 people homeless⁶⁷. These two tragedies fortunately did not cause any human loss. The race for saving gas bottles, televisions, documents, clothes and the pull carts in the first blaze was finally repeated during the second blaze and affected nearly all the same families. However, the first tragedy left deeper scars on them. The solution that the City Hall came to was to transfer these families to one of the empty warehouses in the area, two blocs away from the *vila*, which would become a type of Porto Alegre's "Superdome", the place in Houston that sheltered the victims of the hurricane Katrina. What seemed at first to be a provisory shelter for these families while waiting for their houses to be rebuilt, it soon became a nightmare and a public humiliation. Quickly, the surrounding neighbors, allied with small business people (mainly owners of corner stores, and other small commercial activities) formed a very organized protest line and rallied for the removal of the occupants⁶⁸.

⁶⁶ Zero Hora, March 15, 2004. Cidade. "*Vila destruída desperta solidariedade*" [Destroyed *vila* generates solidarity] .

⁶⁷ Zero Hora, February 17, 2005. Cidade. "*Casa de Passagem abriga as vítimas*".[*Victims sheltered in temporary houses.*]

⁶⁸ Zero Hora, April 03, 2004 - Cidade. "*Moradores protestam contra transferência de desabrigados*".[*Residents protest against removal of unsheltered people*].

Armed with banners, microphones and speakers, these neighbors concentrated in front of the storage, went to protest in the front of the City Hall and called the media, to explain what they were protesting against. Said one of the leaders of the movement: *“We suffer already with violence, flooding and prostitution, and now, instead of helping us to resolve these problems, the City Hall is throwing one more problem into our hands.”* According to the newspaper, these neighbors were informed by the police department that the assaults and robberies in that area are performed by people of the *vila* of *papeleiros*. The newspaper reported:

“for her [one of the leaders of the protest] the proximity will facilitate criminal actions in the area... ‘they won’t be able to stay in this warehouse, so they will take over the streets’... ‘the flagellates who will be installed in this warehouse were at first 90, then 100 and now they are almost 200 people. Who guaranties that it will be temporary? ... We are not insensitive but we are humans and we want to preserve our communities.’ ”

The newspaper also reported the position of the City Hall: *“their concern is comprehensible but exaggerated. Those (families) are workers and they will be strongly supported by us (ZH, id.).”* The solution for this episode was multifaceted: the City Hall decided to anticipate one phase of the EC program and to build what they call “temporary houses” (*casas de passagem*), initially thought of as places to where the families would be transferred while the work went on in their neighborhood. It took eight months for these temporary houses to be built, and although it was built at an accelerated pace, the families were forced out of the warehouse. During this time, some families were sheltered by relatives and the City Hall paid for the rent to other families who had no where to stay.

I understand that two aspects influenced the City Hall's position concerning the conflict in the case. On one hand, the City Hall's position while facing these conflicts was directly related to the spatial location of the residents. On the other hand, the City Hall's position originated from its blindness concerning the racialization of these families. The fact that the city hall did not confront the neighborhood commission in the EC has nothing to do with the commission's power as a movement. Even if the neighborhood commission is neither rich nor politically powerful, these dwellers were strong enough to put pressure on the City Hall, at least stronger than the victims of the blaze. I argue that, for the City Hall, the place where the Entry of the City project is located (a peripheral area at the entrance of the city) has less immediate political impact citywide, since it is a transitory space and used mainly by local dwellers. Thus, the fact that only the neighbors would feel "the consequences" of that moving was, in my opinion, a determinant for the city hall's decision of not confronting the resistance against the families of the *vila dos papeleiros*.

It was very different in two other occasions. The first occasion occurred in the *vila do Planetário* during the beginning of the 1990s, soon after the PT began its first term in the city (1989-1992). In a very busy avenue, near the area's first MacDonald's restaurant, several meters from the Federal University's campus, there was a *vila* that the first PT's mayor Olivio Dutra, and his team, decided to re-urbanize and legalize. The condition of this *vila* was exactly the same as others in the EC, mostly comprised of informal workers and families who made their livings salvaging recyclable material. This *vila* became PT's first

experience of re-urbanization projects in the city. It was surrounded by middle-class residents as well as private medical centers and other types of business that serve the middle classes. Considering that it was the first term of the PT in the city, a strong mobilization took place and the City Hall did not step back. They opposed the media, the neighbors and the public opinion (represented by the newspaper ZH) and kept firmly to their purpose. They did renovate the area, they did build new houses and they kept the families exactly in the same place, confronting all powers, including judicial pleas carried by some surrounding institutions, and housing representatives of oppositional parties. The PT and those families always won because there were no legal reasons for those families to be removed. Thus, from a squatted area, the *vila* became a legal housing project, called *condominium vila planetário*.

A second similar example of confrontation happened in 2003 and 2004, when the PT decided to legalize and re-urbanize another squatted area that is now called *Princesa Isabel* condominium, named after the avenue where it is located. This avenue is very central and located on the way where maybe half of the city crosses through when going to the downtown area. Over it there was a sizable *vila* (Cabo Rocha) and at the corner of this place they built the new housing project. I did not follow this project very closely, but I can say that it follows the same plan. It takes the same pattern of construction of re-urbanizing “risky” and irregular areas in order to legalize them and include the excluded ones. I was told by one public servant of the City Hall that this project was heavily contested, including some members of the House of Representatives who wanted to require an

environmental impact assessment (E.I.A.), to analyze and report the impacts to the neighborhood of that housing project. It repeats here the idea that poor and Black people are polluting and contagious people. However, the City Hall held on to its purpose and did not give up, pushing the project through all of these obstacles. Already the families have moved into the condominium – a situation that no one can change.

Finally, I argue that these two examples (Condominium Planetário and Princesa Isabel) demonstrate how the political conflict over the spaces are determined by the types of spaces that they have been disputed to be and conversely how the spaces themselves incorporate the political practice, in this case, of the PT. These are examples that agree with what Lefebvre has been demonstrating in his theories about space as a “social product” replenished with the ideologies perpetrated by politicians and rulers of a determined society (Lefebvre 1974: 83-195; 1976). Thus, instead of simple spaces “empty” of meaning and coincidentally a stage for conflicts, both situations and the spaces where they are located represent the ideological intentions of the PT. While the PT lost some votes with these disputes it also guaranteed other votes through its persistent fight that made its politics and ideal of the city (that the city is “everybody’s right”) more explicit. Furthermore, these two condominiums, because of their physical presence in two important and very busy areas of Porto Alegre, concretely demonstrated to the city’s population what the administration was doing. The consequences of the PT’s decisions with regard to conflict in the EC are much larger and widespread than they are in terms of the PT’s public

image. For part of the middle classes, as they demonstrated it, these two condominiums were insulting; for poor people and surely for the families who are now living there, the condominiums were the assurance that the PT guaranteed their rights. In this sense and like any other party, it was very important for the PT to demonstrate to the city not only their type of ideological principle, but that they do have one. This demonstration would not have the same impact on the Entry of the City and that is why, I argued, they gave up in that dispute. In the Entry of the City, the motivation to intervene and to resist against the “opposition force” represented by the other neighbors – like the PT did in the vila Planetário and Princesa Isabel – was less visibly political and the PT tolerated the movement because it was not gaining politically from it. Conversely, the space – the Entry of the City – became primarily more (politically) significant when the other parties “attacked” it, calling the area “*o favelão do PT*”, *the big favela of the PT*⁶⁹.

Finally, all these cases clearly demonstrate disputes and events of “racialization of people and spaces” that were portrayed according to the PT’s interests and ideology. In the case of the two condominiums (Planetário and Princesa Isabel), the position of the PT was favored and thus they benefited from those events. Again, the PT decided to let go of the more recent case (in the EC) because politically, there was too little to benefit from. Here in the EC, the rights of the victims of the blaze were only partially protected. Thus, the protection of the less privileged people, the racialized ones, has neither been a consistent concern nor a practice.

⁶⁹ I draw from Bayat (1997: 62) the idea of “tolerance” of the State for some opposition movements.

Black people and urban politics. The reproduction of racialized meanings and common senses

After a consolidated tradition of association with social movements, the PT in Porto Alegre brought this experience to the urban politics. One aspiration that came together with the creation of the program of the Entry of the City is people's "participation". This means mobilization and organization of the communities to discuss, intervene, decide, and vote in the meetings of the Participatory Budgeting (OP). To have people participating is the aspiration of the PT as the ideal citizenship. The OP is the political mechanism through which the dwellers decide which are the priorities in their collective space. For the PT this way of facilitating discussions and engaging people in the decisions promotes what they conceive as a participatory democracy. Although politically well intentioned, the expectations behind the participation of the dwellers also tell us about what the PT conceives of this population, i. e, what are the common senses about the residents.

Like I said before, the City Hall considered the Entry of the City an area which social and economic indexes indicated an underprivileged situation. Besides, there were demands coming from the participatory budget that motivated the City Hall to implement the Entry of the City program. One of the first conclusions about the area was that it needed a re-urbanization project that avoided little reforms so that the actions had to be broader than fixing streets or sewages. Therefore, the administration of the city conceived of the Program as a strategy to develop, re-integrate the area to the city, and to promote better quality of life for that population. As a leftist party, the administration thought of these

ideals to-be expressed as “consciousness”, capacity of “demanding”, and “community mobilization and organization”, among others. For the case of the EC, on one hand these goals to-be accomplished created an expectation about the dwellers; on the other hand, these expectations also contributed to reinforce racialized images about that population. They are referred to by the word “lack”: lack of consciousness, lack of mobilization and organization, lack of order and structure, and finally, lack of citizenship. Fulfilling these “lacks” is considered to empower the people, and the PT is supposed to “provide” them not as a gift but as part of the process of people’s consciousness expressed on their demands.

While the PT understands that politics is something that should be done without paternalism and in a way that citizens have to conquer their rights instead of gaining them as an award, what is spoken about the “citizens” removes them from them their own capacity, or as it is called, their agency. Like any other political institution, the PT has its own conceptions and so, it performs its politics while teaching what a consciousness and democracy should be like. It would be no problem with this teaching process if their rhetoric would not be the one that accepts people’s diversity. The inconsistencies of this discourse is expressed when the PT treats the dwellers of the EC – as well as people from other *vilas* – as “the others” (Keith and Cross 1993: 11), the different ones. Recognizing these dwellers as part of the city’s heterogeneity would imply several different citizen’s positionalities but above of all would acknowledge the dwellers as ones whose lives is not only made by lack. This set of discourses – and practices – finally

creates an arbitrary “citizen”, in this case “poor citizens”, different from the rest of the city and singular in its general state of inadequacy⁷⁰.

My argument here is that these discourses are based on, as well as generate and reproduce “common senses” about the EC’s dwellers. Common senses, being “product(s) of history and (a) part of the historical process” (Gramsci, et al. 1971: 326) is what gives to the languages and their discourses “the elements of a conception of the world and of a culture” (ibid: 326). In this way, the PT’s discourse may oscillate between its own critical point of view and the agreement with the society’s common sense. Considering that these discourses and images coincide with the society’s common sense, they often can be understood as an “ideological displacement” (Hall 1978a: 29), a certain distance between the facts and the understanding of them. Thus, when referring to the population of the *vilas* departing from their “lack” of something, the PT is not considering what the population has, but rather looking over them from the place where they “do not have”. If it is real that it “lacks” many things in places like the *vilas*, it is also true that there are other elements that the PT, on one hand, tries to consider when asking for their participation in the OP; on the other hand, the PT is missing when looking to this population from their racialized position. The “ideological displacement” consists in reinforcing the racialization of people and

⁷⁰ Robin Kelley has extensive criticisms regarding the way the social scientist (as well as politicians, I say) look at and describe the ghetto and the under class under the stereotypes that are “driven more by moral panic than systematic analysis” (1997: 18; 1998: 41). Talking specifically about the “poor”, Ali criticize the “process of constructing the poor”, that, even if considering the “voice of the disenfranchised” ... “remains quite non-dialogic”. (Ali unpublished manuscript)

spaces, which is not an internal process but rather one that comes from the outside and it is made by interpolation and the reproduction of common senses.

Therefore, the images that are recurrent in public servants' discourses are of "degradation" and "precariousness", associated with the image of an area that not only is in "terrible shape", but also it is "isolated" and "segregated" from the rest of the city. Once more, I argue that despite the "real" conditions of the area, the discourse formulated by the City Hall does not contribute to alleviate the bad reputation and unevenness in which that population lives. In many different ways, the City Hall shares the same common sense about that space – and consequently the people who live there – believing that it is unreliable and decadent, and in sharing it, they reinforce segregationist ideas. The key point here is the production of labels that confine a place and its identity (Hall 1978a: 19), so that they – people and spaces – inevitable will be seen from these labels.

The well intentioned ideal of "promoting citizenship" for the dwellers of the EC reveals another discussion in Brazilian social sciences, and more recently in civil society and in the public administrations. The debate around the definition of whether the conflicts and inequalities are race or class-based is becoming more prominent as the state attempts to implement affirmative actions in Brazil⁷¹. If on one hand, part of Brazilian civil society agrees that (universal) policies that

⁷¹ Affirmative actions in Brazil have being in fact implemented as quotas politics. This discussion became officially a policy after the previous president publicly acknowledged the nation as a racist one. Off course, acknowledging it was not his merit but the result of the pressures of the different sectors of the Black movements through out the country, which culminated in a large protest during the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the "discovery" (Carvalho 2005). After these events different public universities started to discuss and to implement the system of quotas for Black students at the same time that the civil society also reacted debating the necessity or not of having such policy. This debate is still going on and far away from being a consensus.

improve poor people's life should be implemented in order to adjust inequalities, on the other hand, other part of the society thinks that to recognize that economic inequalities affect more Afro-descents than Euro-descents is too inaccurate so that affirmative actions are inappropriate. Thus, the fact that the PT in Porto Alegre only partially followed the anti-racist thought is not a surprising tendency in the history of politics decision in Brazil.

In fact, the PT also follows a major and global political trend which is to consider "citizenship" and citizens as the focal point of the government politics (Roberts 2005). If it became a pertinent political model in the world, in Latin America - with the advent and decline of military dictatorships during at least half of the 20th Century - talking about citizenship is a relevant part of the vocabulary of the left wing. Thus, it is not inappropriate for the PT to look at the EC as part of the bigger project of development of "citizenship" instead of thinking about the racial status of the EC's dwellers. It is also not a coincidence that the PT in Porto Alegre followed a historical tendency of treating "people" (*povo*) as the working class, undermining the nuances of the (global) capitalism that subsumes race under the economic relations (Hall 1980; Winant 2001). In this sense, and although the PT treats all dwellers as disenfranchised workers, it does not see that workers – and unemployed workers – are affected by different conditions such as their racial status, which makes them potentially more poor facing the capitalism system (Silva 1985; Silva 1999; Telles 1995). Likely, for the meaning given by the PT to the Silvas' struggle in the Mont Serrat. Even if the PT supported the Silvas' claim, the administrators seldom referred to it as a racial case. Who

recognized it as such was, evidently, the Black movement affiliated to the PT and who drove it as a(n) (urban) quilombo struggle. For the PT, it was still a case of lack of the citizenship.

That is why, when the City Hall promoted a small event where the anthropologists officially presented the anthropological report to the Palmares foundation, all speeches given by people of the different sectors of Black movement mentioned the racial struggles for land rights and the historical exclusion of Black people in urban and rural lands. When the official representative of the city hall talked, he did not mention that it was a racial struggle, but yet a “social exclusion” matter:

“we are very proud of our [the city hall’s] participation in this struggle and we hope it will help the family Silva to recuperate what is their right. The Silvas, as well as other families in Porto Alegre, have been demonstrating a tireless struggle against social exclusion in the city, and the city hall is proud to participate in one more moment where the justice is being done”. (public speech of the representative of the city hall. September, 2004. fieldwork journal).

While treating the EC’s dwellers as “citizens” without recognizing different forms of oppressions – named racial oppression and exclusion -- that affect different people of the Entry of the City, the PT in Porto Alegre reinforces general national ideologies – I would say, Brazilian common senses – concerning racial relations. One is the already mentioned ideology that people in Brazil are discriminated by class and not by race. I underline another one which is the racial democracy, since the municipal administration avoided to talk either with me or in any other circumstance about questions of race. In my first meeting with the team that works in the EC program, I heard for the first time the position of the city hall:

The coordinator of the meeting introduced me and explained what I was doing there. When I was asked to explain with my own words the purpose of my research – and after they heard that I was focusing on Black families – the coordinator explained to me that ‘this approach that I was looking for [race], the city hall doesn’t work with. The DEMHAB (the Housing department) doesn’t work with it... Our approach is the social one, we don’t even work with gender (approach). And besides, how can you tell who is and who is not black? I think that here [around the table] we all have a passage through African ancestry. I think that in the Guaranha and, in the Silvas⁷², they do have the race/ethnicity question. I think what you want to call of ‘race’, it appears more as ‘culture’, for example, with people from hip-hop, from capoeira, people that do graffiti... Over there [in the Guaranha], I even saw a guy who was wearing a t-shirt on which it was written ‘100% black’, then I think that some places like those you will see more explicit this question...” She also mentioned the case of Mr. Itamar, one member of the dwellers’ commission, “who is visibly afro-descendant but doesn’t recognize himself as being so...” to argue how complicated my position was”. (fieldwork journal, November 2003).

This excerpt shows my first encounter with the position of Porto Alegre’s City Hall concerning race. In this meeting at least two positions emerged that I qualify as representative of both the City Hall and the Brazilian racial common sense. The first one is the question that I learned I was going to hear often after explaining my research project, which was “how are you going to define who is and who is not Black?”⁷³. This is one of the Brazilian common senses that departs from the idea that “we, Brazilians, are all mestiços” (mixed-race), and in being so,

⁷² The “Guaranhas” and the “Silvas” are the two areas in where Black movement and sectors of the city hall are trying to legalize as urban quilombos. Both places are named after the families and are both located in white middle-class neighborhoods that have been, since the 19th Century, Black neighborhoods.

⁷³ This is a question that I consider deeply rooted in Brazilian common sense and I heard it from many different sectors while doing my research in Porto Alegre. This statement would be only one more Brazilian non-racialist statement if it would come from the politicians or workers in the city hall, but the fact is that I was questioned by my colleagues in the local academia and by other intellectuals from other regions of the country, with variations in the question. For these intellectuals outside from Porto Alegre, the question of “how to find Blacks in South Brazil” was always a very central question addressed to me.

the question of race is not pertinent – but reversely, we do have to think about different “cultures”. The second one was stated on the “social” question, being “social” equivalent to “poverty”, or unequal distribution of wealth.

I want to underline one “essential” argument of this conversation. The connection between the first idea and the second one is located in the separation between “race” and “culture”. In stating that class is what matters – “we work with the social problem” instead of race – and in the following idea – “we are all mestiços”, the coordinator of the meeting stated also the idea that racial identity can only be witnessed when manifested through an essentialist form, for this case, capoeira, hip-hop, graffiti and... a t-shirt! That is, the real Black can only be seen and recognized when doing a certain type of things. The distance between these identities and the negative stereotypes is very small, as I will show in the following paragraphs. As stated by this civil servant, if on one hand being black in Porto Alegre means to do certain types of things, on the other hand it could also be said that Blacks who have different life styles are risking not being (essentially) Black. In this way, in treating all EC’s inhabitants as “poor citizens”, the civil servant also recognizes that, since “we are all mestiços”, not necessarily they (and “we, mestiços”) are poor in the same manner. Furthermore, looking at *mestiçagem* instead of at Blackness is only one more way of reinforcing that behind the *mestiçagem* there is Blacks and whites (Vargas 2004) and the to attempt to the color spectrum is just another variation of the racial democracy myth.

Thus, I consider along with Hall (1980: 342) that the statements that I heard in my first meeting were part of the (racist) discourse that “dehistoricize” the historical structure that is part of being Black in Brazil. In denying this identity to Black people of the EC and in calling them all “poor” and “mestiços”, the civil servant ignored that in the EC there are different types of poverties that affect differently blacks and whites. That is, that the question of class in the EC has to be more accurately considered because it is differently experimented between blacks and whites. The history that Mr. Elpidio told me is a paradigmatic of different poverties in the Entry of the City.

Racial disparities in the Entry of the City

In a hot summer afternoon in Porto Alegre, I met Mr. Elpidio, an old Black man in his sixties that has been in the Entry of the City for more than 35 years and that also worked in a rural area as an employee, raising cattle in one of the coldest and wettest area of the State. He told me that, after having repeatedly suffered from pneumonia, he came to Porto Alegre because of his serious health problems and could no longer work in such conditions. Since he was illiterate the only job that he could have in Porto Alegre was as a worker for several construction companies. He worked for five years and had received, for the first time, his SSN and his worker identity papers. After his house burned down and the company where he worked went out of business, he lost all of his personal belongings including his documents, which he could not replace. Since then, his daughters financially support him and he has devoted himself to working, like he said, for his “community”. Although he calls himself an “officially retired man,”

he is not, given the fact that he receives no pension. Today he lives with one of his daughters and walks through the *vila*, talking with people and trying to help them with the demands that they eventually face in their life.

From this example it is possible to see how historic race-based (dis)advantages benefited white people in the same area. Minutes before, I had met Mr. Bigode, a 30 year old man of German descent who, along with his wife, moved from the northern part of the state to Porto Alegre six years ago. They have their own bar with a pinball and slot machines, in a very busy corner of the *vila*. When I asked him what they did in their original city, he told me that they worked on their own small farm cultivating soy. Because of adverse circumstances, they sold their piece of land and migrated to Porto Alegre “to try and see what was going to happen”. Nowadays, they run their small business and they own a house and plot. The day when I met these both men, I was walking with some people of the city hall. They were presenting and discussing the modifications that were going to be done in that street. Since his house was a “legal” one, with property deed and located in a legal plot, Mr. Bigode was having the permission to renovate and increase his house. Mr. Elpidio, whose house was located a few meters from the first one, would have his house partially demolished because part of it is located in a place where the street should be passing through. Mr. Elpidio argued and tried to convince the DEMHAB’s team that they should remove another house, instead of his. The public servants firmly explained to him that there was no way for it to happen and the conversation ended up with him leaving the meeting and again reaffirming his racial position:

“it is only happening because I’m black... they don’t do the same with that one...”.

These are two different examples of how historical advantages for the euro-descent couple continue to facilitate their life, while as for the old Black man the adversities are not only harder but also tougher to overcome. As I walked with him after he left, Mr. Elpidio told me that he knows that being Black largely affected his opportunities in his life and makes it harder for him and for his family, especially regarding the right of holding property. He also explained to me that he was ashamed that he was financially dependent on his daughters and was frustrated that he had no recourse to acquire new documents and loans to buy his house. Moreover, these examples lead again to the discussion of what extension class or race is the most prominent component of the disadvantages. If for Mr. Elpidio it was clear that racism was the cause of his misfortunate history, for the PT his class condition is the one who has to be stressed and that is what the Entry of the City Program is focusing. What Mr. Elpidio demonstrated is what was already notice by dos Santos (2006: 37):

“the police, the justice system, public and private employers, the media, ... and other social groups and institutions can instantly identify Blacks when physically or symbolically attacking them, denying them jobs for which they are qualified, and punishing them more severely than their white counterparts...”

Once more, it was difficult for the PT to acknowledge that race plays an important role amongst poverty in Brazil and for the particular case of spatial segregation it was even more difficult to see race as an independent component because, as I have been arguing, the PT’s ideology is embedded in the “color blindness” national ideology. Besides, *“silence about discrimination and*

prejudice is not surprising since the naturalization of race and class connections make it reasonable to discard racism and accentuate classicism as explanation for why Blacks continue to be marginalized” (Vargas 2004: 450).

Conclusions

In this chapter I discussed the urban politics implemented by the PT as continuities of the history of racialization of Black people and the spaces where they live. I try to demonstrate how metaphors for race become evident on the ways that spaces are seen, described, and understood. I use the case of the Silvas as a multilayered situation that demonstrates several levels of analysis. Throughout the history, the meaning of the space where the Silvas live was transformed from adequate to squat, therefore, it was altered from positive to negative. The Silvas are also emblematic of the debate between race versus class which, for now, is having in class as winner. Last, the Silvas’ case is also representative of how the alliance with the Black movement can generate a different perspective to these struggles. Although the Silvas’ case is not yet resolved, the involvement with the organized Black movement shifted their struggle and made it more notorious. If it did not become less abusive for the family, for sure it was transformed into a racial struggle, thus a struggle that is faced as an anti-racism mobilization.

I also demonstrated how the politics implemented by the PT, although well intentioned, is not consistent since the party follows Brazilian common senses and trends of avoiding the confrontation of inequalities based on race.

Inevitable, the PT followed its own political interests and in doing so, it negotiates its own position about the spaces at its own conveniences. PT's position in front of the three cases of disputes over the two different re-urbanization projects (vila Planetário and vila Princesa Isabel) and the third reaction taken when facing the protest in the and Entry of the City, are also representative of how the PT reproduces Brazilian common senses avoiding (or challenging) a confrontation over the space, when these disputes have racial implications.

Finally, in this chapter I also demonstrate the different racialized common senses represented by the gossips and rumors that circulate amongst neighbors, “contaminating” the neighborhood as well as the representatives of the City Hall. These rumors that are reproduced within the *vilas* were present in the cases of the rejection of the victims of the blaze, in the case of the Nica's family and in the everyday life when the neighbors expressed their fear of the future neighbors. With these ethnographic examples, I hope I demonstrated how spaces are racialized because of the moral judgments that come along with the common senses about both, the spaces and their dwellers. Next chapter, I demonstrate how these common senses operate in the everyday life of the *vilas*, making them segregated spaces divided by their own internal segregation.

Chapter 4: Politics of Place: *Everyday Life of the Entry of the City*

“- Guri! *Vai tomá banho **agora** que já tá tarde e a água vai esfriá!*
- Mãe... *agora a gente tem chuveiro elétrico. A água não esfria mais.*”*

In this chapter I present vignettes from the everyday life of the *vila*'s inhabitants and their social interactions. With these vignettes I do not seek to present a linear history of the space and their inhabitants, rather I present pieces of their everyday life that reflect my partial view of the life in the *vilas* and therefore fit into my argument⁷⁴. I use mainly my observations from my fieldwork at the Entry of the City (EC). I designate EC the whole area where the program has been implemented and I specify when it is in the *vilas* or already in the new housing project. With this ethnography I intend to describe 1) The existent hierarchy between Black and Euro-descendent families in the EC, a place that is seen by the PT and the rest of the city as one more *vila*, a place of poor people in the city; 2) the relationships between Euro-descendents and Black people as well as the significant differences and inequalities that appear amongst these residents. With this ethnographic analysis I hope to demonstrate patterns of racialization of people and the spaces that they inhabit. I argue that the historical differences amongst Black and Euro-descendent families have been reproduced in everyday life and that Black families are always in obvious disadvantages. These

* “Hey, little boy! Go **now** to take your shower because it's late and the water will be cold! Mom, we have electricity now and the water doesn't get cold anymore.” Dialogue between a woman and her son. Winter in Porto Alegre, first day in the housing project.

⁷⁴ I consider mine a “partial view” of the life in a *vila* for many different reasons. First, as a middle class scholar and anthropologist, my presence in the *vilas* is limited by my work and/or research interest and in the case of this dissertation, by the limited time that I spent in this *vila*. Second, as with any other human being, my view is constrained and limited by my own experience, expectations and theoretical background.

disadvantages are expressed and reproduced in the space of that area so that the geography of that *vila* redistributes Euro and Afro-descendent people hierarchically. I also argue that local people reproduce racial stereotypes about Black families in blatant and everyday ways, thereby affecting many socio- and economic levels through different generations. These forms of racism, I argue, are both a continuation of the historical experiences of Black people and a present construction that limits the ability of Black people to enhance their lives.

Diverging from mainstream literature about cities in Brazil, I argue that Brazilian urban centers **are** racially segregated and that the *vilas* are the most profound and evident expression of this racial segregation because contain racial segregated spaces⁷⁵. However, I also argue that this segregation is located within the economic segregation that configures Brazilian urban centers and apparently is more apparent than racial segregation. In other words, I contend that even though the *vilas* like the Entry of the City and their population are evidently poorer than the rest of the city, they are constituted by an internal hierarchy that evidences race as an important factor that divides this segregation. The real fact that the *vilas* are places where poor people live, and places that are separated from the rest of the city because of class inequality, obscures another internal division. This other division is based on race. In the discussion about life in the *vilas* that follows, then, race becomes my main focus, and I argue that it reinforces and accentuates class inequalities.

⁷⁵ In a recent example, Telles argues that in Brazilian urban centers it “is more difficult to find systematic residential segregation based on race” (2003: 174). Telles does recognize that class alone does not explain urban segregation in Brazil, but he attributes this to “self-segregation” and “racism”, “or both, besides class, as contributors to racial segregation (Telles 2003: 176).

Although my goal in this dissertation and specifically in this chapter is not to analyze inequalities and segregation based on class, I do acknowledge that economic inequalities are an important factor within the *vilas* and *favelas* of Brazilian urban spaces and in the EC as whole, since the inhabitants of these places are the poor and economically excluded people. However, and based on my ethnography, I dispute the common sense notion that sees that inhabitants of the *vilas* and *favelas* in Brazil as merely poor people. Although I do not ignore the existence of class as a segregating factor, I challenge this common sense notion as one that is blind to the color of poor people, and argue that being Black in Brazilian urban centers makes poverty more complicated. Equally important is the position of Black women in this scenario. Even though I do not ignore the inequalities based on gender, they are not my main concern. In this work, I give gender very limited attention, something necessitated by my limited focus on the racialization of urban space. The role gender plays in this process will have to be taken up in future work.

As I have underlined in previous chapters, the Entry of the City is considered by the City Hall as one important “irregular” area in Porto Alegre. The Housing Department’s (DEMHAB’s) team of social workers that works in the EC acknowledges the differences amongst the many *vilas* in the city. The social workers do this because in a certain sense these professionals have followed the history of the *vilas*’ development in the city. While they respect the particularities of each *vila*, at certain points all *vilas*, because they are squat settlements, become irregular areas, requiring sooner or later, the intervention of City Hall. City Hall is

also aware of the particular history of the Entry of the City and because this is where the urban intervention is happening, they have to consider its particularity. One important point that I want again to highlight in this chapter is that *vilas* are not homogeneous places even though apparently they look all the same for the external eyes, including public institutions. Even though the housing department – and especially its social workers – knows about the singularities of the history of these places, suggests to me that *vilas* end up being treated homogeneously (as places of “poor people”) for political reasons. The social workers do recognize the internal differences, conflicts, and hierarchies of the *vilas*, but nonetheless do not give internal inequalities such as race and gender special attention. The social workers know about the “state of poverty” of each family, and they do try to deal with these differences the best that they can.

An important point of tension between the residents of the EC and those who conceived and implemented the EC Program concerns the conceptions of and the meanings attributed to the space. The way that the City Hall’s planners think of that space and the way that the residents appropriate it diverge from each other because of their obviously different experiences and relationships with it. The residents, needless to say, share a lived, therefore knowledgeable, experience with that space. They manifest their conceptions through (sometimes covered) feelings: frustrations, fears, anxieties, as well as delightfulness. The public servants see that space from a functional and – why not? – abstract and homogeneous point of view (Lefebvre 1974) and these different conceptions are explicit in almost all conversations between them, as will become evident in this chapter. This does not

mean that the residents, because they share the experience of living in that space, share the same “meanings” (Rotenberg 1993) amongst themselves, and they not only conceive it differently, but also their meanings are often contradictory when not conflictive with official views. This will be determined by their class position, gender, generation, and often by their racial position, and other social factors that shape their everyday lives.

Residents of the Entry of the City have expressed in different ways their conceptions of the space. I had an interesting opportunity to see a disagreement regarding the (dis)value of the alleys (*beco*) in the *vila*. As the public servants explained that the streets should be widened so that an ambulance or a fire truck could pass through, two families were disagreeing with each other and with the public servant. One of the women – a Black woman – complained about having a street in front of her house instead of the alley, because, she argued, “*it would be only for the police and other cars to run*” in front of her house, and she was concerned about her kids playing in front of the house. The other woman argued that she preferred to have a street, since “*alleys are only for vagabonds and bandits to run through*”. The public servants agreed with the second woman, and kept explaining the necessity of having a street, giving the example of the *vila Esperança* and a fire that might have been less disastrous if a fire truck could have entered the *vila*. These examples of conversation were recurrent and they were performed when the residents stated their different positions and meanings, and faced the city hall regarding important issues like their horses, pull-carts and the space to lodge their recyclable material.

Moreover, the process of moving into the new housing project brought the residents all sorts of mixed feelings. Initially, many families expressed their fear of moving into a new area that they did not know, even though it was pretty close and in the same neighborhood. It was interesting for me to see how some families expressed their insecurity about moving into the new place, even if in my understanding – influenced by my middle-class perception of “stability” – I consider that the new housing project would offer more security and stability to those families. In saying that, I am not ignoring the real fear and insecurities regarding the process of moving into a new place but rather, I want to point how these different perspectives about “moving” can conflict with one another. The housing department and the *vila* residents had different perspectives about it and these became clear during the preparation of the moving and during the day of the moving, when I saw many women crying without knowing very well how to pack, what type of belongings to carry with them. I also saw many men upset about the act itself, about what they expressed being “*this mess with our [their] life*”. The housing department’s team was sort of appalled by these manifestations of discontentment and they expressed that it was hard to understand since they – the DEMHAB – really believed they were doing something positive for these families and they just did not understand these afflictions.

As my research was progressing I understood that what the DEMHAB was homogeneously calling “irregular” areas had internal divisions, differences, and varied ways of being “irregular”. Being a member of these areas included different levels of risks and vulnerabilities and the housing department tried to

respond to these perceptions of risk and vulnerability by creating a new housing project, which they believed would help to solve many of the problems. Yet the housing department did not foresee other problems nor did they create policies to specific needs of families. Being in an “area of risk” could mean having a leak in the rooftop or rats walking around the yard and inside of the house. But it could also involve conflicts with the neighbors in which one family could be threatened to the point they were forced to move out. In one incident, for example, an ex-husband sold his house before the ex-wife had moved in. Internal conflicts within the families could also put them in a situation of “risk.” I witnessed a conversation between a social worker and an old man that highlights this point. The old man had to travel to the country side and when he came back his daughter had sold their plot and the house to another person, and he did not have anywhere to live anymore. As he explained to the social worker, he was also asking the housing department for its help, since he was spending some time over some friends’ house and wanted to have his house back.

Living in shacks can also imply a constant fear that someone is going to break into residents’ houses when they are at the work or when their kids are by themselves. Then there are the illegal businesses like irregular rent contracts and land scams that can be cancelled anytime according to the mood or wish of people that in Brazil are called *grileiros*, or swindlers⁷⁶. In sum, these are only some of the vulnerabilities that many of those families who go through them cannot

⁷⁶ In a detailed piece, J. Holston (1991a) explored how land law in Brazil is “confusing, indecisive, and dysfunctional” so that it ends up covering some of these fraudulent procedures that are, like he showed, usually with a great amount of stamps, signatures, seals, so that the agents involved complicate their participation on these deals.

resolve because of the generalized lack of “legalized” status, usually documents, as we are going to see later. More important, “lacking” legal status is only one more way of accentuating the racialization of those families and their space.

An interesting argument presented by Roy (2005) and AlSayyad and Roy (2004) conceptualizes informality “not as the object of the state regulation but rather as produced by state itself” (Roy 2005: 149). Roy uses the example of “informal houses” of upper middle classes’ gated communities. The author calls them “informal” because of the practices and styles that are involved in these constructions. Teresa Caldeira (2000) points out a similar situation, recalling that in São Paulo the upper middle-class residents of gated communities act almost like they had their own law, so that if something happens they will not call or communicate with the authorities and will try to resolve their own issues between themselves⁷⁷. In the same way, Perlman (2004) reviewed her first study on (the myth of) marginality in the favelas in Rio de Janeiro (1976) and argued that, if on one hand there is an improvement in the life of some residents that she contacted for her first study, on the other hand many families are in the same point, with aggravations, in where they were thirty years ago. That is to say that the actions of the public power not only partially improved life in that favela but rather perpetuated the “marginality” for the most of the families.

These debates can be gathered and read in a way that conforms with Roy’s arguments: at the bottom line, middle-class gated communities are built and function with the agreement of the local authorities and so are occupied with same

⁷⁷ The author refers to a rape episode that happened in one of those communities and that the families decided to take of that problem without calling the police.

tolerance as the “irregular areas” in the city. It does not mean that the City Hall allows these areas to be squatted and occupied but rather that in doing little or nothing to provide other types of infra-structure so that people do not have to move into the favelas, the public power - represented by the City Hall and its different departments – is part of the process of the “irregular-ization” of these families and spaces. Roy and AlSayyad’s concept of “urban informality” as a *mode*, “an organizing urban logic” rather than a *sector* that is apart of the “formal” [sector] is what feeds and maintain these families as an important part of the “system of norms that connect different economies and spaces to one another” (AlSayyad and Roy 2004: 5; Roy 2005: 149). Beyond economic (class) “informalities” that surround those families, there are also other types of informalities that affect their everyday lives and that are just as important and that I believe intensify their “formal” state of vulnerability. In describing some of them I intend to demonstrate the different levels of how being “informal” differently affects Black families so that it intensifies their “racialized” state in that space.

Although the representatives of the city hall - the social workers - always try to help these families, being an “irregular” dweller produces severe consequences. The housing department can neither create nor issue documents since this is not its job, although they can orient these persons to go to the right public service’s office. However when it is not possible for these documents to be issued, the housing department cannot be very helpful since establishing and keeping the “regularity” of housing is the rule that they try to maintain. The

problem with this maintenance of the “order” is that it always excludes some, and usually those who are already the most excluded people. I was curious when I saw that despite the efforts of City Hall to not break the “law”, the new housing project started with a couple of infra-structural problems that would neither be accepted in upper middle-classes buildings nor in any other construction that would have been more closely inspected by the authorities. Two major infra-structural problems were revealed right in the first day: one had to do with the electricity meters and the other was with the kitchens’ sewer compartments. Although these can be considered minor problems, the questions that remains is first, about the quality of the service for poor people – considering that for sure they will not have enough money to repair their houses – and second, it also questions the tension – and why not contradiction - between the effort of the public authorities in the “maintenance of legality” and then of the “order”, at the same time that the public institutions themselves “break the law”. It is then possible that Alsayyad’s argument that states the importance of culture - not the pathologized cultural stereotypes that blamed the poor but rather culture as a “mediating role between the structure of urban society and the physical needs of a city’s inhabitants” (1993: 34) - does make sense for the case of Brazil, since there is in this behavior the same old (almost aristocratic) tendency of Brazilian society that maintains privileges for a small “caste” and cheats poor “people”⁷⁸.

⁷⁸ Although I consider Alsayyad’s (1993: 40) argument regarding “Latin American’s model of informal urban development” a generalized model, since my experience does not always see squatting processes as “more politicized movements”, his argument regarding the influence of the “cultural” factors is important to analyze how politics – in the restrict terms of policies and politicians’ acts – is demanded, applied, and developed in each society.

Moreover, I also see the “cultural” element in these procedures of being “out of the law” even when trying to be “legal” because we Brazilian citizens somehow learn that the law is applied differently for different groups of people⁷⁹. These ways of seeing, treating, and dealing with these families is what contributes to and reinforces what I have been naming as “racialized processes” in a way that those families will not get rid of their stigmas, their lives will not be improved and personally, I will not be surprised if they end up (illegally) selling those houses, like some of them have already done. Cultural behavior is, in this case, this eternal underestimation of some groups that do not challenge old ideas and stereotypes.

THE ENTRY OF THE CITY: MAPPING RACIAL INEQUALITIES AND HIERARCHIES IN THE *VILA*

My first encounters with the Entry of the City were attempts to get familiar both with the space - its alleys, streets and small corners - and with the families that were going through the moving out of the “illegal” areas. More than get used to these two very important dimensions for this work, I also wanted to get familiar with the dynamic within those families and the City Hall, those families and the rest of the city and with the dynamic between themselves. Since one week after my arrival in Porto Alegre it was happening the second round of moving in to the second of the brand new housing, I had the chance to see both the enthusiasm and excitement of those moving, and the discontentment and

⁷⁹ I agree with Holston (1991a) and his discussion about the external “dystopias” of the law. I do think that law is applied differently not because it is far away from the reality but rather because those who write them want the laws to be like they are.

frustration as well of the families that were not yet moving out and had to wait until their houses were ready. In those three days of moving, I had small pieces about the way they live and of what they had with keeping their lives. Moreover, I had a small demonstration of what the EC was in terms of the racial hierarchy. The moving out was following a sort of scale – one street first, then the other and so on. The excitement of the families that were moving out was notorious and at certain point of the day the families that were supposed to move out the day after could not handle the anxiety, so that they asked for permission to move their things in that day. The social workers hesitated about giving the permission since the scale was defined in order to allow the moving company, the workers and their trucks, to accomplish the entire schedule and the necessities of the families. As I walked around the *vila* with one of the social workers following the families carrying their things into the truck, we were stopped and inquired about the possibility of moving “today”. At certain point, the social worker said yes, they could do it only and if they would take responsibility over their moving, meaning, if they wanted to use the truck they would have to wait for their turn, otherwise they had to do it by themselves. These families that were asking did not hesitate and when I noticed they were yelling to each other, asking for help and interrogating about this and that person that could help them. That is when I had the small preview of the racial hierarchy of that place.

As I followed the families carrying their things into the truck that was hired by the city hall to drive their furniture, I also noticed the difference between the amounts of furniture and belongings that were being carried. I was passing by

the houses and the social worker was also showing me the type of houses and the conditions of them and their surroundings, as I saw some residents using only a small space inside of the truck, which was not that big, I realized that their belongings were really not abundant. I recalled my moving in that past week before I left to Brazil and I felt a little uncomfortable and why not, ashamed with the amount of things that I had to move. I used one entire truck and there in the EC three or four families were using the same truck at once. Mrs. Maria, a euro-descendent woman in her sixties who was moving out at that day showed me her house as she was embracing her clothes wrapped in a sheet – two rooms that she shared with her son. She explained to me that she could not take the kitchen counter with her: it was “*ruined and decayed*”, and the only thing that she would take with her was hers and her son’s beds. Our walk through her house did not take more than one minute, three steps later, we had seen everything and we were done with the visit. When I saw her son’s bedroom I thought: interesting, he sleeps looking at the stars! His roof was covered with one of these transparent roof-tiles. Considering the heat of those days, I just thought that the little two-bedroom house could be unbearable both nights and days.

In another five minutes she had all her belongings loaded into the truck – an old refrigerator, a stove, their two beds and a small television - and dominated by her emotions, she hugged the social worker and cried like a kid, thanking him. She hugged me also and invited us to have a coffee over her new house. I said yes, and later during my visits to the new housing project I passed by her new house and followed her relative progress. Mrs. Maria bought a used table with

four chairs, a used sofa and she painted her refrigerator with a different color. Since her bedrooms are in the second floor of her house and I did not have the chance to go upstairs, I asked her whether they had already a wardrobe to keep their clothes and she said not yet, but it was in their plans. She told me that she subscribed for one of the PT's (federal government's) new economic aid plans that provide small credits for retired people and that is how she is buying little by little her things to her house. I was glad to see her improving her house and her life.

Going back to the moving day and after the social worker said "yes" to the families that wanted to move out and did not want to wait for more one or two days, I saw some families expressing how they would move out of their houses and how they were going to carry their belongings. The first solution was to carry the belongings in their pull carts. The second one was to carry them in some of the horse-carts, and the third, was to carry them in one of the available kombis. The first alternative was the most repeated one. The streets – the alleys I should say - became quiet busy with people carrying their belongings in pull carts. It was one way to carry the refrigerators and perhaps one or two more trips to carry what was left. What became firstly evident was that many families did not have pull carts and the negotiations between those who had and those who did not began. The social worker kept telling them that they should wait for one or two more days, so they would move without expenses. What could be an arrangement between neighbors became one more resource and possibility of making some extra money. The hierarchy was already given and I started to notice that only a

few Black families were having the pull- or horse-carts for free. The ones who decided to move ended up paying for the rent and many of them waited for the next day because they could not afford to pay for the transportation.

That moving was happening in one of the poorest areas of the *vila*. The streets were not paved and everything else – electricity, water and their bathrooms - was “irregular”. Walking down that street, I could see at the end of the corner a two stories building and, for me, the beginning of a different area. So, that *vila* where I was in, was a sort of a huge “enclave” in the middle of two housing projects (vila Tecnológica and Condomínio Mario Quintana), this later built several years ago. And the transition from one to another was, for me, marked by two very important points: one was a white man’s house, the “owner” of some pull-carts and of a kombi used to load and to carry the recyclable material, another was the “*armazém do Alemão*”, the grocery store of the “German”.

I was told that the owner of the pull-carts hires some people from that *vila* who pick up recyclable materials. Although his house was a wood house, its size was evidently distinct from the shacks that were being destroyed after the moving. I learned that the sizes of the houses would implicitly tell about the time that the families were living in that place so that the families would have time to increase and to improve their “irregular” homes. This man had a reasonable size wise yard where I often saw his “employees” (most women and kids) separating plastic from paper, aluminum cans from copper, and so on. Also, I would often see an amount of pull-carts “parked” on his yard, which indicated his economic “position” in the *vila*. I could not understand why the relationships between him,

his family and other representatives of the PT and of the City Hall were so friendly, since for me it was already evident that that man was the “owner”, the “master”. That man was an “allied” of the PT in the *vila* and afterwards I heard some suspicious comments about him coming from the public servants. I heard that public servant’s position was “complicated” since he was an allied but still, the public servants who knew the local hierarchy and the ways that those work relationships were happening were not what the PT would like to.

In front of his house, right at the other side of the corner, there was that two-stories building. Downstairs there was the “*Armazém do Alemão*” (the grocery store of the “German”). Upstairs was the “*Alemão’s*” family home. Up on the rooftop a flag was waiving, as if indicating a territory or demarcating someone’s area. I never found out what that flag was about but yes, I went to that grocery store a couple of times to buy water and, looking at the prices I noticed they were just exorbitant. the *Alemão* had everything that any other corner store in Porto Alegre has – from vegetables to soap – but the prices were very high considering not only the area and the customers, but also the average prices in the city. The only reason that I could find out for that exploitation was that he really knew what he was doing in keeping those prices – profiting from those families. Later on, I heard that he was also the “owner” of some shacks that were rented in that *vila*. And this was a disturbing factor for both the social workers as well as for the tenants, since the firsts knew that he was sustaining one more irregular situation in the *vila*, and the second ones had to pay another exorbitant price for having a one-room roof.

Besides being the owner of the biggest grocery stores in the *vila* and basically having the monopoly of the grocery sales, in being the owner of some shacks “*Alemão*” was clearly contributing to the cycle of exploitation that holds some of those families. Since he has the economic power to build new shacks and then to take over the plots that he considers are available, he has also certain power in determining who lives in the *vila* and who does not. He is certainly the businessman interested in seeing the money on his pocket, however, we were told that he did not allow a woman to move into one of his “properties”, meaning one of his shacks.

As I pointed before, during the moving the procedure was vacate the houses and immediately to destroy them, to avoid any other family to move into those that were empty.⁸⁰ In the middle of that afternoon, a dweller whispered to the social worker that someone else was building a new house in X place, exactly from where a family had just moved out. This family’s house was knocked down the day before and a second family was building their new shack. They know what the law says that if there are four external walls and a roof (which characterizes a home), nobody can evict you unless through a judicial order which can take a couple of years. Meanwhile, one has time to raise the children and to find a different solution for the housing problem. I was very impressed with the audaciousness of that young man, since in those days, the *vila* was simply busy with public servants and people who were “authorities” in the housing issue. I

⁸⁰ This was the strategy built by the city hall so to avoid an endless cycle of squatter in that area, as it historically happens with other housing and re-urbanization projects in Brazilian cities, in which while some families were being removed, others were moving into the area so that they could benefit of the Program and with some luck, get a new house. (Valladares 1978: 52)

followed the social worker through the alleys and in the middle of what seemed to be a war scenario – because of the houses that were knocked down - we reached the place where the young man was building his one-room house.

The social worker tried to stop the construction only by talking with the young man but he did not stop to move around, grabbing woods, nails and putting the house together. Some of his friends were helping him and while he did not stop setting the house, his (up set) conversation was about his right of having a house for his pregnant wife and for himself. The social worker did not disagree with him but rather warned him that he could not have his house where he was trying to build it because that area was already being reserved for the future of the Entry of the City Program. Their conversation lasted less than twenty minutes and since he did not stop the construction the police officers arrived and stopped him. The social worker had already called the police officers and asked them to wait for his signal. As he did not persuade the young man to stop with the “invasion” of the area, the officers came and ordered: “either you stop it or you will be arrested”. The young man stopped, not without shouting out his indignation. At certain point, and in the middle of the argument with the officers, he said that other people were doing the same with the agreement of “*Alemão*”, who had told him he could build his house in that area.

As my field work progressed it became more evident that these power inequalities expressed through class position of different racial groups, that I was seen in my first days were manifested in these families’ everyday life, and they were accentuated by their racial position. What I call “having” and “having not”

factors were presented to me as I testified the families deciding and defining their moving day. These factors determined who had and who did not have those extra items – and/or the money - that could help in their moving. Having or not a pull-cart, a horse-cart or a kombi was conditioned not simply by their class position but also by their race. While as Euro-descendent families were the “owners” of the pull and horse-carts, as well as of the few kombis available – not to mention that they occasionally were the bosses and the owners of the shacks - Black families were the ones who had to rent one of these to fulfill their anguish for being in their new homes earlier.

It happened that some of the families negotiated and moved out carrying their belongings in the pull-carts. Many of them did not have enough money and had to wait until the day after. In the day after, I talked with some of these families that stayed and waited for their moving and they expressed their fear of being “abandoned” in that area of the *vila* during the night before, already without neighbors. The ones who would not be removed neither in the day after nor in any expected close day, because they were more “irregular” than the others and were not included in the Program, these were trying to negotiate with the social workers the necessity of keeping the restrooms that were shared with other families. Finally, and as we will see in this section how some Euro-descendent families were complaining about intimacy and privacy, a couple of Black families did not have even their own bathroom and were sharing it with other families. Now that these latter had left, something had to be preserved. By the end of that day those Black families who had moved into the new housing project were still

sorting out some things from their old houses: a sink, a door, some roof-tiles and a couple of woods, so they could sell them and make some extra money, hopefully some that would pay for the extra expenses that they had when deciding to move by themselves.

CONFRONTING RACE IN PORTO ALEGRE. RACIAL DISADVANTAGES

Besides the generalized – and now discredit - myth of racial democracy, Brazil is also invested in a “non-racist” ideal, which denies the existence of differences between races and consequently, of racism (Guimarães 2001). In this section I hope to demonstrate via ethnographic details different types of inequalities between Black and white families in the EC in Porto Alegre, and consequently how their livelihood is affected by their racial conditions. There are several elements, although often subtle, that make clear the hierarchies between Afro and Euro-descendent people present in Porto Alegre’s urban environment. The factors that determine who are the “haves” and who are the “have nots” – the ownership of properties, control over the means of productions and access to the requirements of the bureaucracy - are very important and not only affect living conditions but also create the hierarchy that is expressed in the lives of both Euro-descendents and Black families.

I will start this session by describing a visit to the EC that I took with social workers and architects to an area that, although irregular, would not see its inhabitants removed. The majority of that area was going to be “regularized” in the terms of City Hall, meaning that they would receive legal propriety deed, but in order for it to happen, there were some requirements that needed to be fulfilled.

These requirements were a combination of architectural and legal procedures. The streets would be widened, paved, and in order to the residents to get their property certificates, each house should have access facing the street. Hence, it was not an easy requirement to fulfill since lots of plots had at least two houses sharing the same main entrance and these families would first have to agree which side of the plot was going to be defined to each house. Second, residents had to find a solution about how to open another (some times three or four) main entrance, facing the street. This requirement came from both the office that provides the property deeds and the municipal fire department. The day I went to this area, it was the architects' objective to explain these requirements and to show to the residents solutions and alternatives to accomplish them. We visited several families and I used that opportunity to achieve some of my goals of my research: to evaluate the conceptions of space presented in the EC and more important, to evaluate the similarities and disparities between the technicians' and the residents' conceptions of space.

Some situations were really surprising for me since I was not expecting the many varied discussions, ideas, suggestions, and complaints I heard. Since I did not know that part of the EC very well, I became equally surprised by the spatial organization that I saw, namely by the spatial hierarchy that I started to apprehend from that day on. Like I said before, that part of the EC was an area in which the land regularization program was to be applied without completely removing the families. So, the majority of those houses were going to continue being there, they only needed the adjustments that I mentioned earlier. As we

pursued our visit I started to notice that these plots that had two or more houses were inhabited by what I will call a group of mixed racial community, i.e., by white and Black families as well as inter-racial families. Consequently, and since our visit had to go further than the entrance gate, I started to notice that often Black families were living in the back yards of the white families. Not surprisingly, and since the decisions that should be taking were concerned to the necessity of an independent main entrance to each house, I heard many different comments regarding the families *“of the back side”*.

For example, we visited a family that was living in a three bedroom cement house (that also had a living room, kitchen and a brand new laundry area), who shared the plot with another family that lived in a two room house (one bedroom and one living room linked with the kitchen plus the bathroom). In this house, a white woman was telling to the architect: *“we don’t have problems with them...(the rear’s neighbors) they are cool and respectful people, but... [whispering] we don’t have privacy... we want to drink a mate here on the shade after our workday, and there is always these kids playing around...”* I noticed this family also had kids, and they seemed to be the same age and in fact, the scene reminded me of Luanda, when I used to see Black kids playing with their *mestiço* friends and the differences were huge: Black kids used to dress very modestly while as the *mestiços* differentiate themselves not only by their skin color, but also by the way they dressed and, more important by the type of toys they used to bring together. While the conversation continued, the head of the backhouse, Mr. Carlos, a Black man in his 30s, showed up through the door and greeted us. We

all said good morning but the conversation kept going between the first family and the architect. I was already getting anxious with the fact that nobody addressed Mr. Carlos, when one of the social workers then turned into him and explained what they were talking about. Mr. Carlos immediately became worried about the main and individual entrance because in his mind, he clearly did not know how to solve this problem. The architect suggested that the first (white) family could donate a piece of their plot to open the second main entrance. The head of the first house reacted very abruptly saying *“I can’t do this, we are good neighbors but I cannot lose a piece of my plot to open a new entrance that I will not even benefit from”*. The architect and the social workers started again with the discourse of *“solidarity”* and that many families would have to give up of a couple of meters of their plots in order to have everything *“in order”*. The tension increased as Mr. Carlos, visibly upset, heard his front door neighbor refusing the proposal, offered to pay for the couple of meters. Again, his answer was negative. The architect then decided to walk around the plots to see how it could be made. We ended up going to the left side neighbor and here a new conversation began.

The next door neighbor was Mr. Valdir, a 62 year old white man that introduced himself as *“the happiest man in the vila”* [*“o homem mais feliz da vila”*]. As we arrived he was spraying water with a hose onto the street, *“because of the dust”*. He is the owner of a small corner store [*armazém*] that sells vegetables and other industrialized food (canned food, pasta, etc). I counted and that day he had only a couple of products to sell and most of the vegetables were already decomposing. In spite of his limited and rotting merchandise, he kept

saying that he was “*the happiest man in the vila*”. It was hard for the architect and the social worker to get to the point of the visit, since Mr. Valdir, very talkative, first explained his history in that place. He bought that plot 43 years ago, when “*almost nobody lived there*”. He and his friend, who already passed away, bought their plots and nowadays all three of his daughters have their own houses that he bought them. Proud of his efforts that he made “*with these [his] hands*”, he invited us to go to the shade inside of his front deck and while we bought bottles of water, he kept telling us how good life was at that time: “*it was like a paradise! There were no thieves, no crimes, no vagabonds and we could even bathe at the canal that they covered...*” he complained. The architect then started to tell him what they wanted to talk about and once more, Mr. Valdir interrupted to talk about his case. He wanted to increase the house of one of his daughter who lives in the back of his house and that is how the conversation got to the point. With it, the architect and the social worker could go to the rear of the house to see the plot and, since the increasing of his daughter’s house had to be towards the other direction, the architect explained to Mr. Valdir what Mr. Carlos’ problem was and asked for that little straight piece of the plot – at the back of the daughter’s house – to build Mr. Carlos new entrance. Mr. Carlos immediately said that he was “*willing to pay, if Mr. Valdir made a nice price*” [um precinho camarada]. Mr. Valdir agreed to think about and they both stayed there discussing the arrangements. In a different day I met Mr. Carlos and he told me, smiling, that he was going to buy the piece of plot and would pay it monthly, during one year. I congratulated him and asked if his wife was happy, he said “*yes, she is*”. That is

how I asked him “*where is she now?*” and he said she was at her job, “*she works for a company as domestic servant*” and I asked about his work, he was working as a security guard, in a “*house of ‘nice’ people*” [“*na casa duns bacana*”]. Mr. Carlos and his family, although living in the same place, will have a different address, since their main entrance is going to face the left side street.

With these two visits I show how racial status affects differently white and Black people. These instances demonstrate how the space is hierarchically divided between white and Black families. In showing the worries and struggle of Mr. Carlos, I hope I also showed the advantages and disadvantages present amongst the three families or how race affects not only their class position but also the space of the EC. For all of these Black families “having” and “having not” are determinant factors that situate them in a lower position within the local hierarchy of the EC. Having or not having pull carts determine, in that case, not only whether they will move when they decide to, but also, it determines whether they are self-employed or employees. These conditions are also going to determine the geography of race in the *vila*, in which Black families occupy the fringes of the fringe and Euro-descendent families are the ones who finally will have the advantage – because their advantages are historically given in a way that marks the difference between being poor and being Black AND poor. Once again, this tension between “having” and “having not” is what makes explicit the perpetuation of historical racism that affects Black families in Brazilian urban centers in general, and in the EC in particular. In other words, the class dimension is an important factor in these peripheral areas of contemporary urban centers

though race is the dimension that marks the geography for these Black families (Jackson 1987). In the next case, I will show how race, space and consequently class affects an inter-racial family.

I met Mr. Paulo and Ms. Lourdes in an afternoon that was a follow up to the visits of the architect and the social worker to the same area. Mr. Paulo is a Euro-descendent man and his wife, Ms. Lourdes is a Black woman. They have been married for 14 years and they had three children. Again, their case was similar to the first ones, with the difference that they lived in the front house, and had another – also Black - family living in their backyard. They both needed to regularize the “main entrance” and for them it would be easier, since they had already their own main entrance. They needed to take care of some details like the sidewalk and some internal details to help their neighbors to get their own main entrance. Their problem was that they have a car and as it is now they use to park the car in front of the house, right next to their bedroom window, “*because it’s easier to hear if they try to steal it*”. With the new urban rules they can neither park the car on the sidewalk nor block the main entrance. So they have to park either on the street – which in Brazilian urban centers is an invitation to the thieves - or to find another place to park their car. The architect suggested them to rent a garage, since they do not have enough space to build one inside of their plot. I thought this suggestion was a joke, actually an inappropriate joke and although it is clear that mostly of those families can not rent a garage, this comment only showed different classes’ conceptions to resolve the problems of

everyday life. This negotiation was less complicated than the first one, since this family had only one solution available to them.

I do not know how Mr. Paulo and Ms. Lourdes ended up deciding but for me it was clear that, since the Housing Department does not have the power to tow cars away or to give fines, in some sense it was implicit that they would disobey the rule and would keep the car parked in front of their window. The result, however, would probably be that the weight of the car would seriously damage their sidewalk. More than the car spot, what I thought it was attractive in this couple was the different positions in the job market that were presented between them, in my opinion, determined by their racial conditions. Mr. Paulo was a *businessman*, as he defined himself. Coming from the countryside, from an area where cow raising is the main economic activity, he told me that he works “*with cows*”. He did not give me long explanations about his job, but he told me that he sells and buys cows. Ms. Lourdes told me, a little shyly, that she works as a domestic servant but, she warned me, she does not “*sleep at the job*”⁸¹. She comes back home and takes care of her “*house, children and husband*”. She told me that “*the money is short*” but they just finished up with the renovation of their bathroom: “*it didn’t have tiles, there were only bricks here in the walls, now we have tiles which makes a huge difference...*”. About the car, she said:

⁸¹ The practice of domestic servants to sleep at their jobs was more common a few years ago. In the countryside it still happens but little by little the work laws have been changed and the cost to employers has become so high to high that they are not asking for it anymore. With its roots in the slavery system, it is obviously a very abusive practice that consists in hiring someone for a monthly salary without specifying the amount of hours a day, which ends up confining the worker to do the job for much longer than she/he gets paid for.

“car is not a luxury anymore, it is a necessity, and my husband uses it for his work, so, we need to have one”. “What really makes me sad is the floor... look! Have you ever had a floor all patched? (she asked me and I said no, but I see what you are talking about) So, it is such sadness! Through here (pointing to a patched hole on the floor) the rats used to go in and out!, It is sad, it really makes one mentally sick! [isto desacorsa a gente!] I think there are people who even drink because of these types of thing... not having money to invest in your house, is really sad! She kept repeating while serving me another mate drink.

For me it was interesting to meet this inter-racial couple because the hierarchy in the Brazilian job market was demonstrated in that family. Statistical data related to racial discrimination in the job market reveal some important inequalities that explain Mrs. Lourdes’ position in relation to both her job and her husband, a white man. In discussing the position of “Black Women in the job Market” Maria Aparecida Bento (2004) demonstrates that in Brazil the salary of Black women never goes above 53% that of white men even when they have the same amount of experience and levels of education⁸². 71% of Black women occupy a greater number of the most precarious and informal activities, compared to 54% of white women and 48% of white men. In this case, Mrs. Lourdes’ position in relation to her (white) husband is, statistically, 37% lower. In addition, Black women’s average salaries never reach more than half that of white women, even if they go earlier to the job market and leave later. Although this family was not at all a rich family, with the wife’s help they made some extra money enough to buy a used car, considering that in Brazil even used cars are not cheap like in

⁸² The pyramid’s design for salaries in Brazil is, from the top down to the bottom: white men, Black men (46% of white men’s salary average), white women (79% of white men’s salary average) and on the bottom, Black women, who receive only 40% of white men’s salary average (Soares 2000).

the U.S. Like I have been showing, the ‘having’ and ‘having not’ factors are again determining the life of peoples of the EC, and having more or less money to improve the house is also part of and determined by their racial conditions, for this family, half determined.

I had the chance to see the moving out of some families from the *vila* IAP to the second housing project (Condomínio Progresso) and once more, I had the opportunity to see the place of Black families in the EC. It was February 2005 and under the hot summer sun in Porto Alegre I was curious to see them moving from what to my eyes appeared as a “regular” area. The avenue was paved and wide enough to be a “regular” area, they had electricity and piped water and for me it did not make sense to remove those families from there. The problem was the families who lived in the rear of that street and of those families’ houses, since behind them – parallel to the street - there is the free-way and the area between the street and the free-way is really swampy. Many shacks were settled there and were recently built (in the last 10, 15 years) so that the area behind those houses was also considered a squatted area. As I walked through the trucks and the families loading their things, I stopped under the shade and talked with a Black family. Mareni, a Black woman in her thirties, told me, excited, that she could not believe that (the moving) was happening. I asked her whether she was moving today and she said *no, only tomorrow*.

As always, I asked her for how long she had been there and other details about her life in the *vila*. She told me about her grandmother who was already

living in the area and how, after she got married, her husband built their house behind her cousin's house (i.e., between the front house and the free-way, in the middle of the swamp). As a domestic servant, she told me, along with her (Black) husband who "*is a construction worker*", they "*never could improve very well*" that after the Entry of the City Program started in 2000, they decided they would not spend money in their house anymore, only if and when it were really necessary. I asked her when it was necessary and she said:

"well, our house, you can see it from here, over there... it rains inside, so we always had to fix the roof and to fill up the holes in the walls to keep the rats out. But it was always patches, so we had to do it every other month because it doesn't last long". As she was pointing out and showing me her house from that pleasant shade where we were, I asked her if she wanted to show it to me. She was straight and secure: *no, no, no...* And as she looked down, as if thinking, I asked her why not? Looking firmly into my eyes, she said: *because I am ashamed of living there. I am ashamed of those woods which I have to walk through to reach my house... I am ashamed of the shit that surrounds me... of living within the patches and holes... that is not a house, it is a shack and even if I try to fix it and to give it a face of a home, there is nothing that I can do... My children always asked me why we are living there and after tomorrow, I hope they won't ask me anymore, because that is going to be our house!"*

She laughed out loud expressing to me a mixture of anxiety with joy about the day after, and she said: *over there you can come and visit me, have a coffee [um cafezinho] with me... here?!?!?! Hum-hum*, shaking no with her head.

I stayed maybe one more hour with her under the shade and as we sat on the small wall of her cousins' house looking for the others to move out, I again saw the same thing that I was already noticing. Mareni's family, as many other Black families, was living in the back yard of someone else. At that day, many Black families were moving from the rear of somewhere. Again, their belongings

were so few that they fitted in any corner of the truck. On the streets, some men were collecting their electricity cables before to throw down their houses and others were already burning them, melting the plastic cover to sell the copper part. That smell is always stench and it is hard to get rid of it once it impregnates the nostrils and it often does. Two days later I went to the new condominium and passed by Mareni's new house. She came to her front door and I asked her how her first night had been and she said, smiling: *ah, minha filha! I did not know how it was like to sleep without mosquitoes! I didn't feel them this night but still, I couldn't sleep!* I said, joking: Did you miss them? We laughed together and she kept inviting me to pass by, *outra horinha*, in another time, to have a coffee with her. I promised to do it and I did a couple of times, to see her and to refresh my throat with a glass of water.

White faces and Black people: how gender, class, space, and race are affected by the instability of living in the *vilas*

I have been describing how economic and social disadvantages affect Black families more intensively than Euro-descendants in the Entry of the City. In this section, I want to describe how these disadvantages are intertwined with other aspects of "being woman." I would like to discuss how sexism and gender discrimination affect especially Black women, who are the ones who suffer the worst consequences of being Black and poor. Black women are at the end of the chain of discrimination. As I have described earlier, black women hold often at the lowest position in the social hierarchy. As mothers and wives, they are strongly affected by the situation of living in the *vilas* and the instability that it implies in being there. I would like to underline that, although I acknowledge that

gender would be a fruitful and enriching discussion and part of the different levels of racism that affects Black people in the Diaspora, I choose to use some examples to emphasize the point that factors mentioned previously (economic inequality, sexism and racism) together have been maintained Black women's lives in a vulnerable position (FEE/RS in: Werneck 2003b: 56). What follows is less a detailed analysis about how women are affected by the racialized thought, but rather, a preliminary discussion about women are affected by the stereotypes and other negative images that are part of the being a dweller in the *vilas*.

We were walking in line through a very narrow alley heading to another house that had to be removed because it was right "*in the middle of the street*," when I saw coming into our opposite direction a young Black woman. I was the last one on the line, and I noticed that the three persons in front of me. I guess because they were very concentrated on following a map of the area, they neither looked at nor greeted her. I looked at her eyes and greeted her. She then stopped and asked me if we were looking for the house number x and I asked the DEMHAB's team. They said yes and she said "*this is my house, I'll take you guys over there*." She turned back and guided us through the alley, making many turns to the left and to the right until we reached her house. Then I saw that Mr. Elpidio was there, the old Black man that I had talked some weeks before. Dalva, 33 years old, is one of his daughters. The housing department team started to explain to them why they had to be removed: "*Mr. Elpidio and Ms. Dalva, your house is in the middle of the street*". They will build this street to connect it into the one that follows behind Mr. Elpidio's house. The situation is like a "T" format and Mr.

Elpidio's house is right in the middle of the part that will make the intersection to complete the cross. Dalva lives in the back yard, with her two daughters. Her house has two rooms (one living room and one bedroom; she uses Mr. Elpidio's bathroom).

Mr. Elpidio lives with the other daughter and his brother has his house (one room) upstairs. The DEMHAB's team explained to them that the intention was to keep the whole family together (closed) in the same condominium. Mr. Elpidio could not believe that it would really happen and kept giving different solutions for his case. The architect, asked for a table where they could see on the map what was going to happen and why they had to be removed. After the explanation, Mr. Elpidio started to move around looking for a pen and a piece of paper, while the architect complained, whispering, "*it is so difficult to make 'them' understand*". Mr. Elpidio came back with a piece of paper that is used to wrap the bread, and I offered him my pen, since he could not find one. He put that piece of paper on the table, reproduced the main part of the map, at least the part that involved his house, and created a second map, drawing the planned street over another house. At that point, I was very impressed, considering that Mr. Elpidio was a man who worked as a cowman in the field for almost half of his life. I could not imagine his abilities to create a new map of his neighborhood. Besides, I was very happy to see him contradicting the comment made before, that it is "*difficult to make 'them' to understand.*" Mr. Elpidio not only understood but also was giving a second alternative to them. When someone asked him why that specific house? He, sadly, answered: "*And why mine?*"

Because I'm an old Black man? [sou um negro velho?] Don't forget that that house is a woodhouse, and mine is a cement house... much easier to destroy that one than mine...". The DEMHAB's team, knowing that I was interested in racial issues, immediately looked at me to which I answered only with an eye movement trying to turn the conversation back to Mr. Elpidio. This conversation ended, again, with the DEMHAB's team reinforcing that the family would be removed, and they should be prepared for it because there was no way of changing the plans. Once more, Mr. Elpidio confirmed what I was seeing regarding the spatial hierarchy in the *vila*, which is a division between cement, wooden houses and the extreme that are shacks.

The people of DEMHAB left, and I stayed a little bit more with Mr. Elpidio and Dalva. They showed me their houses, and from upstairs Mr. Elpidio explained to me why they should remove the next door's house. The neighbors – *"these Germans"* [*estes alemão*], they explained to me, have chickens and the smell is terrible, they do not clean the yard and Dalva told me that there was neither once nor twice that she had rats in her house and yard that come from the neighbors. *"They are nasty people, I think it's fine to have chickens, but please, clean the yard because we are not obliged to smell your dirtiness!"* Mr. Elpidio recalled the conversation that we had a couple of weeks before when he told me that he was a cowboy in his youth and when he moved into Porto Alegre, it was because he was already sick and the doctors told him to leave that job in the ranch. He came to Porto Alegre, and he had to start from the scratch and the only job he could find was in the construction area. He did not have any official paper

with him, not even his worker's paper since his boss – in the field – “*did not understand very well about workers' papers*”. When I agreed with him saying: *yes, in general bosses do not understand very well about the workers' rights*, he answered to me: *minha filha*, (“my daughter”, as if defining the real difference of age and experiences between us) *what do you think that a Black man can do in the field? Being over there, very isolated and far away from every thing? He [his boss] did not understand about it and I did even less! So, I came here sick and without any paper[s] and only five years later I got my workers' credentials*. I came back home thinking about his situation – “in the field, far away and isolated” – and thought that, in the end, in Brazil often workers neither have papers nor rights, which is yet another sign of the heritage of slavery⁸³.

As we were going downstairs, I asked Dalva where she worked and she told me that she [was] a house cleaner. She did not have a regular job; instead she went to house-cleaning once a week to some families.. I asked how many houses she cleaned weekly, and she told me that she had five houses, one for each day of the week, but she had to quit one of them. One day, after she had finished her work, *the patroa* (her boss) said that she did not have the money to pay for the work that Dalva had done since *the patroa* was going to leave for summer vacation. She asked Dalva to come back a month later. Dalva said that she felt so humiliated and exploited that she never came back. I asked how much she charged for one day of work and she said R\$ 25,00 for 5 to 6 hours of work (at

⁸³ This practice is very common special for Black women who work as domestic servant. An old Black lady told me once: “*I came here (to the EC) more than 35 years ago. I worked in 'family's houses' [casas de familia] and I only realized what it was to have worker's paper when I got a job in a company*”.

that time, less than 10 US\$). Dalva told me about her partner, a 60 year old man, with whom she was trying to have the third kid: *“I want a boy!”* Why? I asked, and she said, laughing out loud: *“because it’s going to be easier for him to have a better job so he can pay my bills when I am old! You see here, me and my sister, we two have to ‘bust our ass’ [a gente tem que ralar feio] to help our dad... Men’s lives are much easier to solve than ours...”*

The situation of Mr Elpidio and his daughter Dalva is another example of how these different levels of inequalities affect the life of Black families living in the *vilas*. I consider this family’s situation as a typical example of the instability and vulnerability implicit in living in places like the EC. The lack of official “papers” is recurrent in the lives of poor people in general, but it affects Black people’s life differently. The previous example of Ms. Maria, the old lady who subscribed to the Federal Government financial aid program is a good contrast, since the only way that she had to participate in that program is through presenting her papers and documents. Mr. Elpidio not only did not have his documents but also, it took too long for him to get them and when he learned that he could have them and that they were part of his rights, they were burned in a blaze. He could neither renew nor to ask for new one since he had to prove that he worked in a construction company, which did not exist anymore. So, he could not prove his past as a manual worker⁸⁴. I also consider that Mr. Elpidio’s misfortune

⁸⁴ The case of Mr. Elpidio migrating to the city in the 60s, just follows the tendency consolidated in the 1980s, when in this “adventure process [moving to a big city] passing by civil construction is almost a rule” (Kowarick 1980: 156) .

regarding his papers echoes the struggle for property rights and for acquiring their missing papers lived by the Silva family that I explained before.

Similarly, Mr. Elpidio also sees and lives the racialization of his space, Since he constantly refers to the fact that he is “an old Black man,” The meaning that he gives to his house and the surrounding space is based more is practical and livable experience, while as the City Hall explains the necessity of removing his residency from a very functional point of view. I go back to the question that was posed to me when I was talking with someone from the City Hall about the case of the Silvas and I wonder what would happen if Mr. Elpidio were a rich (and white) man and wonder if he would go through this situation. I also remember what happened in the beginning of the 1990s with Vila Mirim⁸⁵. In that area, all families were removed. Finally the ones who won the fight were the rich night club owners and the surrounding bourgeoisie along with the City Hall. As Black women, Dalva and Mrs. Lourdes are not exclusive cases working as domestic servants and going through experiences that historically have been accompanied Black descendants in Brazilian history. This aspect of Black history is still existent in the vila. Now, I want to point out some cases that I consider are representative of the varied levels of discrimination against Black women, which intersect with different kinds of discriminations and subordinations that became apparent for me in the dynamics of everyday experiences in the *vila*⁸⁶. these

⁸⁵ I mentioned Vila Mirim’s case in my first chapter.

⁸⁶ For this discussion about the discriminations and subordinations of Black women in the vilas, I draw on Kimberle Crewshaw’s “Background Paper for the Expert Meeting on Gender-Related Aspects of Race Discrimination” and use her concept of “intersectionality” to understand how different dimensions place Black women in evident disadvantage. (Crenshaw 2002)

examples demonstrate how women, especially Black women, are discriminated against. Next, I will demonstrate how racial stereotypes intertwine with space, class, and gender and how they negatively affect Blacks and women of color in poor places such as this *vila*.

Another situation involving the racialization of Black women happened in the Summer of 2003. The temperature in Porto Alegre during the Summer is hot but the climate can suddenly change. One day in December, when the temperature dropped down to the 15 Celsius and a heavy wind was blowing in the city, I went with the social workers for what they called a “mission.” They were removing one family that was living in a place that I would consider literally a barn, because their horse was sharing the space with them. There was another family, who inhabited one block away from this place that needed to be moving into the new condominium at that time, but decided that they did not want to do it now and asked for moving into that barn. The social workers had agreed that they had to convince this second family that they had to divide that barn – a *dance hall* like they named it – with another family, headed by a 26 years old mother and her six children. We went first to talk with this family who was negotiating to move in and the social workers explained to them that the rule They explained that they had to move out and that the house needed to be demolished so that it would not be squatted. However, since they were willing to move into that barn – to have more space to store their recyclable materials -, they also had to agree to divide the shed into two parts to make room to this 26 years old woman with her kids, since she was living in a very precarious situation and one of her kids was

seriously sick. When we entered into the shed/barn/house, I notice that living there could be extremely cold because of the wind that blew crossing the unfilled walls. On the other hand, the advantage of living there was the absence of floods, which the woman's family has had enough of.

The negotiation between the social workers and the first family who wanted to move into the "ball saloon" that I witnessed was a hard one. The arguments varied from the privacy and solidarity to needs and prejudices. Mr. Cleomar, an indigenous-descendent man from the northeast of the State, did not want to agree: *"no way, because that woman from the 'alley X'(beco X) is 'annoying', I know her... everybody here in the vila knows her, and it won't work, my woman (wife) will not agree with it"*⁸⁷. The social workers started to explain calmly that that family was in need, they were living in very bad conditions and that they had already two members of the family severely sick, one baby and the father who was at the hospital with meningitis (later, I heard – again!- rumors that he, had AIDS). That was why they needed to move into that place and he, Mr. Cleomar, and his wife needed to understand the situation of this family and have

⁸⁷ "Alley X" (Beco X) was named after the initial letter of a popular word used in Porto Alegre to refer to vagina. According to some neighbors, the *Beco* received this name because many years ago, when one of the now empty depositories were still functioning, the workers used to go the alley to date and occasionally have sexual intercourse with prostitutes and girlfriends. For me it was very annoying to hear many different variations of the same history since all of them were strongly sexist. When I finally reacted to a comment of one of the City Hall's servant and asked if he did not find sexist that the alley was called X instead of P (I was referring to penis) since IF the women were having sexual relationships there, there was the necessity of the "Ps" to be present, and in my opinion the men could also be used as a joke like the women were, he answered me with a classic *"no, because whatever men do they do not get the fame, the X is 'who' is always going to be affected"*. In that negotiation with Mr. Cleomar, he was using the place where the woman was living (*Beco X*) as an excuse to doubt of her "temperament" and implicitly, of her reputation.

compassion for them. The conversation got heated as Mr. Cleomar became more and more unwilling and indisposed to accept the terms.

After almost one hour of discussion, one of the social workers lost their patience and one of them clearly said:

*“you are being selfish! Everybody here knows that you are an honest worker and if you were in her situation everybody would try to help you. We are doing you a favor, but if you don’t agree with sharing the house with her, we are going to move HER into this place and you will move quietly, like the others have, into the new condominium. We are going to let you think and talk with your wife and later on we’ll pass by your place to hear about your decision. If you guys do not agree with dividing this dance hall with her, we will move HER into here, and period!”*⁸⁸

After this very tense ending, we left and passed by the 26 years old woman’s house and I understood what they were calling “bad conditions”. Because of the rain the day before, her one room house was half flooded, therefore very humid and all kids were on the bed “for not getting a cold.” The little one in her arms had fever and she was waiting for her neighbor to come and take care of the others to take the baby to the health service. To avoid frustration, the social workers did not say anything about their plans, they only said they were trying to get her out of there and asked her if she had to move in a rush, if she would do it. She said yes, but asked where they were trying to put her, because she had to think about her kids’ security. The social workers explained that they were trying to do their best and to move her into a better place, with no flooding anymore.

⁸⁸ Afterwards the social workers agreed that the way they talked with Mr. Cleomar was more a strategy than anything else, since nobody can be forced to move into the new condominium. What happens, in the case that someone refuses to move, is that this family signs a statement saying that they did not move because they did not want to, so the housing department would not be responsible for the appeals that will, for sure, be presented against the housing department. Those families will have to, sooner or latter and according to the Program’s pace, move out from the irregular areas.

Finally, in the afternoon, we passed by Mr. Cleomar's house and he said that it was ok; his wife had agreed to share the space but with one condition: the young lady with her family could move into that place above the horse's place (something like 2x2 meters), the woman had to build the stairway and to open her own independent entrance and he was going to bring his horse to live with them, under the room where the family was going to live. Perplexed, the social workers looked at themselves and one reacted saying to Mr. Cleomar that everybody knew horses were not a good thing to mix with human beings and in that case it could be even worse because they were trying to protect that family from diseases and the presence of the horse inside the house would be unhealthy for both, his and the other family. When they asked why not leave the horse where it is right now? He said that one reason he wanted to move into that place – the barn - was because he would have enough space for his family, his recyclable things AND for the horse. Frustrated, the social workers left and postponed their decision for the day after. Meanwhile, they warned, Mr. Cleomar to wait. The day after, the social workers came back agreeing with Mr. Cleomar's proposal, thinking that later on they would convince him to take the horse into another place. They did not bring the young lady with her kids because of the danger to have the kids and the horse together. They kept trying to find a solution for her situation.

This was a situation that explained to me how racialization of people and their spaces can be accentuated within an already racialized space. That woman, a dark skinned woman, was suffering different levels of discrimination. The fact that her husband was for a while at the hospital, created space for the rumors that

he had AIDS. Because he was sick, she had to take care of her family by herself. Being a mother with six children and having to take care of all of them by herself was not only a responsibility, but also a stigma. The possibility of having the AIDS' contamination around her was wisely mentioned by the social workers as a "polluted picture" of her. But above of all, being a dweller of the "*beco X*" places her in that stigmatized place – known as a place of prostitution and with a bad reputation. Finally, the residents – represented by the man involved in that negotiation – reinforce the external politics of different levels of racialization of people and their spaces: "the racialization of minorities is a process of defining the polluter" (Keith and Cross 1993: 27).

One morning of January of 2004, I was told that the director of the housing department was going to a meeting at the *vila* Mário Quintana. When I arrived, the director had left – I heard later that he was there for 10 minutes, and left others representing him - and there were only other representatives, more specifically persons linked to the OP and not to the housing department. On my way to the area, I met Élide, a Black woman activist and one of the representatives of her *vila* for the OP. We were walking together heading to the place where the meeting was going to be – a public square – when Élide diminished her speed and astonished said: "*I can not believe that that guy is here!*". I did not know who "that guy" was but I did recognize the other, a white guy that works in the OP and is responsible for that area of the city⁸⁹. Dressed in

⁸⁹ While I was in the EC I learned that there are two different levels in the structure of the OP: one that is composed by the representatives, residents of the city's zones who represent the other residents; another one that is the bureaucratic stance, like regional offices, composed by people

very fashionable and expensive clothes, this man almost ignored Élide as she approached them. The two “men” kept talking and the one who Élide “could not believe was there” was giving professorial explanations about what and how he thought things should be done. Élide, as the representative of the area for the OP, tried to intervene in the conversation but she got no attention. At certain point she exploded:

“I can’t believe you’re doing this! [and called the name of the OP’s representative] I am the representative of the OP for this area, why are you talking with him and not with me?” And looking at the other guy’s face she said: *“what do you want? The elections [for the OP’s representatives] are not now but are you already campaigning for yourself? For sure you are!”* Élide was shaking, she had tears in her eyes, when the white bureaucratic guy embraced her and said: *“calm down, woman... we, from the OP’s office have to talk with everybody from the community, not only with the representatives...”* She brusquely stepped back and said: *“you do not touch me! I am not your woman and do not talk with me as if I was one of your women... If you think that what you are doing is correct, keep doing it, but do not complain afterwards saying that I don’t cooperate with you guys! I’ll give you one week and you guys are going to call me asking for a favor, you’ll see my answer...”*. To which he sarcastic and ironically replied: *“well, that’s what the representatives are for... if you do not want to collaborate, next year there is new elections...”*.

Élide left and I left with her. While she cried, she told me who was “that guy” and what was going on. In short, “that guy” was a “*laranja*” (an “orange”), an intermediary and agent of the PMDB⁹⁰, who was being co-opted by the OP’s

whose job is to mediate the relationships between the citizens, their representatives and the city hall. This white guy was one of this bureaucratic team.

⁹⁰ In Brazil, a person that is called “orange” is someone “used” either by another person or by an institution in order to cover this other part when illicit business are being done. It is common practice within laundering money, when someone – usually an unknown and apparently without links to the main involved – receives the dirty money and passes it on. In this case, he was a front-person representing the PMDB (a centrist party) to gather votes and support in the *vila*. Since he was gaining more sympathy from the people, because of the things that he – through the PMDB – was bringing to the *vila* (for example, they built a huge child care that is administered by him and where the member of his family work), the OP’s bureaucratic man was making a demonstration of power, in order to, according to Élide, convince him to work with and for the PT. In sum, it was a nasty political situation that was going on, which ended up confronting and challenging Élide’s

(and PT's) representative. Élida had very clear that the attitude of the OP's/PT's representative was like that because she is a woman, and a Black one. Emotionally, she expressed her double position and complained that it has being like that since she entered into the "*macho's*" circuit (clearly, the activism in the *vila*, the OP's representation, the PT's militancy, and the residents commission). She even complained about the language used by the men, in the meeting: "*bad words here, slurs there, only bad words! I don't wanna listen to these terms, I don't use them, I don't understand them!*". As we walked through the *vila*, with she still crying, we met the colleague of the OP's officer, a white woman, who called Élida and came to meet us. She said: "*I know already why you are like this... I saw the two of them together... unbelievable! Two men together can be so machista [sexist!]! Even their voice change when they are together... Élida, just to let you know that I don't agree with what[she said the name his colleague] is doing. I don't trust that other one and I think this situation stinks! [esta coisa fede!]*".

Élida's example tells about the position of a Black woman within a considered "masculine" environment – politics and activism being something for "macho"⁹¹. It was not a coincidence that the way she was treated was performed by two white men – one of the intellectual elites that support the PT in the city. In

representation. Alsayyad (1993: 35) reflects about the "normality" of having people from opposition groups mobilizing squatters with the intention of "threatening the political legitimacy of a government."

⁹¹ The common sense that politics is a masculine arena was also expressed by Perry (2005) when she describes that Black women's organization in *Gamboa de Baixo* in Salvador, was constantly questioned by the authorities who did not understand why and how that fishermen community was being represented by those (Black and poor) women. The ex-senator for the PT, Benedita da Silva, attested the same (Benjamin and Mendonça 1997: 61).

this case different levels of vulnerability were acting together. Her gender position became subordinated to the power position of the two men and their slurs. Her class position was also an opportunity for them to look down to her – an activist woman whose communitarian work is what she earns as her salary. Her residence is in the *vila* and she was trying to defy two men, one who does not live in the *vila* and the other who although living in the *vila*, is the manager of an important childcare in that area. Finally, they both are white men politicking and she is a Black woman, which definitely accentuated her feeling of humiliation. Although there was a white woman who came to support Élide, and complained about the men's behavior, she was undoubtedly not feeling like Élide. That woman shared at least the same class position as one of those men and in certain level her positionality gives her more strength than Élide had.

I also had the opportunity to witness another very impressive scene in terms of sexism and racial discrimination against a Black woman. I went with the team of the housing department to the *vila Tio Zéca*, one of the oldest and populated *vilas* in that area. The housing department team had to talk with a middle age couple, Ms. Maria, 59 years old and Mr. Valentim, 60 years old because their house, a really old wooden house, was falling down and given the demographic density of the *vila*, it was threatening not only this family but the surrounding neighbors. The housing department along with the municipal infrastructure office was ready to demolish the house, clean the plot and to supply more woods to rebuild another one. Meanwhile, the couple had to empty the residence. The social worker went inside to talk with them and I stayed outside

talking with a neighbor and listening to the spectacle that was being presented. Four manual laborers from the infra-structure office – one of them was Black – were waiting for the signal of their bosses – three other men, totalizing seven – and while they were waiting, they were joking about the conditions of the house. They were calling the Black man after a woman's name (“Janice”), and afterwards, when talking with each other, their answer was repeatedly: “*que é, bixa?*” [what is it, fagot?]. I thought it was not only disgusting but also disrespectful with the whole situation. The social worker was inside of the house convincing the family that they had to leave and the old couple was visibly upset by the situation. I saw the old woman coming in and out a couple of times grabbing a plant and other couple of things, asking about what to do with the dog, etc. They were very confused and their movements expressed their confusion. They knew in advance that the housing department was concerned about their security however I understood that the day had finally arrived and they were not ready to do it. Their both faces seemed to be much older than they real age. His son who arrived a couple of minutes later and entered into the conversation. Soon, he grabbed a bucket with washed clothes and started to move a little lost, walking in and out holding that bucket.

The social worker left and gave the signal: “*you guys can start the work by this part*” pointing to the front part. I was impressed and asked him if they would not leave first? What about their stuffs? “*The things that they have fit in a plastic bag, they do not have many things*”, the social worker said. How so? I asked. They must have things like sheets, towels, blankets. Do they have refrigerator?

Stove? Bed? No, they do not. They cook in a woodstove and their bed is improvised and built with wood, so, nothing that they can save or recuperate. Mr. Valentim and Ms. Maria appeared at the door and their son helped them to walk out through the ruins. One of their neighbors invited them to sit down a little bit on the shade and offered water, while their son started to pick up more things, and rescued the dog. The social worker started to explain to the neighbor that they needed help to find a place where to stay in.

The other workers started to demolish the second part of the house – which was very easy to do – cautioning to avoid it to fall over the other houses when their daughter arrived at the scene. She was a Black woman in her mid 30s dressed with the uniform of the municipal office of urban cleaning. She works as a *gari*, which are the persons who sweep the streets and was coming from her night shift. When she saw the scene, she got really upset and, angry, she jumped into the plot in the middle of the demolished house saying to the workers to stop it. Some neighbors started to laugh and make derisive comments while the workers did too. She was getting angrier and confronted one of the men saying “*stop destroying my house! Stop it!*” when this man, that had an iron tool (*pé de cabra*) in his hands, made a gesture like he was going to beat her. He said: “*te mete, negrinha, te mete que eu te dou uma coça!*” [you dare, little black girl, you dare and I’ll spank you!] “*we are here to work, not to be disrespected!*”, while his colleague responded behind: “*yes, you (the first man) go first that then we go behind*” (meaning that the first one could hit her and the others would do the same, afterwards). Another neighbor, a white woman yelled: “*yes! Take this*

‘negrona’ (big Black woman) *away from here, take her to the trash from where she should never had left!*” Her brother tried to calm her down and slowly brought her to the alley, convincing her that it would be the best thing to do because the house was dangerous, for her, their parents and their neighbors. Irately, she left the place and I did not see her anymore.

Someone offered to Mr. Valentim and Ms. Maria an empty room at one alley in the same *vila*. They asked if they could spend that night until they figured out what to do and this man agreed. Two days later, I passed by that place again and asked to the neighbors if they knew about the old couple. One woman took me to where they were and I found Mr. Valentim lying down in a single bed, with Ms. Maria cleaning something. The place had two small rooms and in one of them there was only space for a single bed. . Ms. Maria was in the other piece, preparing something. I asked permission to go inside because I wanted to know how they were doing. She told me that Mr. Valentim was “*doente dos nervos*” [going through a nervous breakdown], and I went to talk a little bit with him. He barely could talk, seemed to be emotionally very affected. I try to say that soon they would have the woods and would build the new and safer house. She said that at that moment, Mr. Valentim was very worried because they had to pay a weekly rent for that two pieces and it was very expensive. How much, I asked? She said 20 RS\$ per week, which at that time was 7 US\$. I asked if they had a retirement salary and she said no. She did not have her documents and she only could ask for her retirement after being 60 years old. It would be only one year later, that was why she would not “*waste money*” with her papers:

“Besides, I don’t know whether I’m going to be alive or not”, she said. “For now, I’m trying to make some money [dinheirinho] to pay this rent”. How? “I’m trying to sell the cans that I’m collecting in the trash. But I’m too old, and I can’t walk too far, so I’m not making more than RS\$ 0,50 cents a day, but we need to buy milk and bread.”

I use this example to demonstrate once more the complex and intertwined combination of different levels of prejudices and consequently disadvantageous conditions that are present in the lives of these families. Firstly, it called my attention that those manual laborers were making jokes that covered all sorts of prejudices: homophobia, racism, sexism and *machismo*. In mockingly calling the Black man out of a woman’s name they were overlapping different levels of prejudices and telling, all at once, that number one, being a Black woman is lower than being a Black man, and number two, worst than being Black, is being a “Black fagot”.

Secondly, and again, this example reminds us about all the stereotypes and negative common senses that surround the fact of being a Black woman in the *vila*.. The association with “trash” that was made by the white neighbor is only one element that is already intertwined within that space and that the neighbor is both expressing it out loud and reproducing it. It becomes worst for that Black woman since she works as a street-sweeper. Like I previously demonstrated, the association with “trash” can be generalized to all residents of the *vila* since many of them are *papeleiros* and live in the same (stigmatized) space, but here it became an offensive mark, a way of diminish that Black woman’s reputation and dignity.

In a big scale I see the examples of those families' lives related to the process of urbanization that takes place in contemporary cities where different scales of conflicts as well as harmonies play together. Cities are, like Lefebvre stated, a very important part of the supremacy of capitalism (Lefebvre 1974). Although the PT was trying to build "another (possible) world", the experience of the EC program would have to consider different levels of competition within the city and for this case, within the EC area, so that the EC can become a distinct experience and space in the city. In the EC, as in any other part of any other city, the varied – and oftentimes conflictive - combination of individuals, preoccupations, goals, limitations, and expectations requires certain "mode of human organization" (Harvey 1985: 222). The PT was trying to build in Porto Alegre and in particular in the Entry of the City an even program, which is, at certain point, incongruent with capitalism system since the system itself establishes its own inequalities and disadvantages. Because capitalism is intrinsically racist (Winant 2001), the PT faces the challenge of taking into account this premise at the same time that it proposes another form of urbanization. In order to be successful, the Entry of the City Program requires dealing with the internal contradictions of the economic system, including the historical disadvantages of Black families.

Moreover, implicit in this idea of re-urbanization projects like the Entry of the City Program are at least two intentions: one is the wish of improving those families' lives by providing urban infra-structure and housing; the other involves a larger scale of improvements to reach the goal of "modernizing" their lives and

consequently the city's life. Both of these goals seem to be at certain point conflictive with those families' lives, since when a modern city regulates its minimum requirements, it excludes horses, pull and horse-carts, and requires "main entrances" that not always can be reached by some of the families. As far as I can see from now, housing is only partially ameliorating those families' lives⁹². Although this is a partial work that does not inquire about the results of the EC Program in the long term, it was already possible to demonstrate that at least the historical disadvantages of Black families were not being addressed and that only a few white families were reaching more effective progress. Not to mention that even if I can not evaluate here the results and the impacts for the EC Program, it was already clear that there is a structural form of racism that affects Black families in general and Black women's lives in particular, and this structural racism is neither easy to be touched nor to be modified.

Finally, I addressed here some examples of how the PT, represented by the City Hall's public servants, presented their (racialized) values while dealing and negotiating with the families of the Entry of the City. I understand that all these negotiations – regarding moving out, demolishing and rebuilding a house,

⁹² I am not going back to the "culture of poverty's" argument, but rather, I am thinking about the "exclusion of the poorest", when these urban requirements cannot be reached and the poorest people – in this vila the Black families – are the ones who have the biggest difficulties to reach their necessities. I do acknowledge that this is a very partial and restricted conclusion about the EC Program and it has to be developed in a long term and future research project that I hope local authorities will pursue. My preliminary conclusions are based on my observations on how Black families – the already excluded – expressed their difficulties for any sort of improvement in their lives. The permanence of the excluded people in the same situation after these similar programs is not a new result and it was pointed by many authors in different occasions. An accurate debate in terms of policies and suggestion of how to facilitate to poor people to be neither evicted nor displaced is presented by Ward (1999).

arranging two families to share the same space, as well as the results that they implied - are all representatives first, of how the PT thought of how the city's space was and how it should be planned, and second, of how that population should understand the new arrangements for the space. Like I showed before, these arrangements imply different negotiations concerning the meanings given to the space, but more important, how these different meanings will be more or less representative of the "racialization of the space". Living in a *vila* implies various stigmas that become transparent in the racialized discourses performed by the City Hall, its public servants, the close and distant neighbors.

These families, like I am demonstrating in this work, have their lives affected in different ways by these internal and external "racialized thoughts". If class position is an important consequence, it also affects their access to political power. Thus, any circumstance of their lives can be related to the generic "less" (able to), a vague "lack of" (infra-structure, capacity), often a prevalent "pathological state" of being. The obvious political consequences of all these stereotypes are evident in the public institutions that see the residents of the *vilas* as needy of "intervention". These factors – reproduction and perpetuation of these stereotypes – are updated by local people (the neighbors) when they establish their own hierarchy and disbelieve in (Black) women doing politics, when they relate Black – and working – women to "trash" and, finally, when space is (mis)understood and mixed to (bad) reputation so that it affects everybody who lives there. Thus the battle that can be seen here is given between the institutions,

spaces, and people. Between these three, the winner will be the ones who have more capacity to oppose, negotiate and then, to be accepted.

Chapter 5: The Local Newspaper: *Zero Hora* and the coverage about the PT, poverty, and Black people

What does the biggest newspaper in the State of Rio Grande do Sul tell us about Black and poor families in Porto Alegre? How do they depict poor people who live in the *vilas* formal peripheries of the city? Which images do they use to talk about those people, the city, and its administration? In this chapter I will to explore the conceptions of city implicit and explicit in this newspaper that both determine and influence politics, policies, and public opinion about the city. This chapter argues that Zero Hora (*ZH*), as part of the local corporate capital, has explicit interests and defends very specific opinions, which are, politically, against the PT, and socially, either undervalues poor people and their places or it explicitly defend bourgeois values for the city. I sustain that *ZH*'s tone and opinion are important elements in the local sphere that contributes to the racialization of poor and Black people in the city of Porto Alegre.

Although I acknowledge that television is a more far-reaching mass medium than newspaper, I am interested in the reports of the local newspaper because *ZH* is the largest newspaper in the State of Rio Grande do Sul and is widely read by both middle and upper middle classes in the South of the country⁹³. For me, this indicates that it (in)forms the public opinion and what I have been calling common sense about poor and Black people in that region. Besides, and since the network company is the same (RBS), usually the news that

⁹³ In 2006, *ZH* circulates an average of 173 thousands papers daily. On Sundays its number reaches 250 thousands papers.

are written in the newspaper are also broadcasted on their media, so that what is for them considered newsworthy is also broadcasted on the television. The difference is that on the newspaper the events get documented and are less perennial than on television. For that, I analyze ZH's reports as a methodological strategy since I can also follow both what was said years ago and what is contemporarily documented.

In this chapter I follow mainly the analysis of Stuart Hall *et al.* (1978) in which he discuss crime, mugging in particular, "as a social phenomenon, rather than as a particular form of street crime" (p. vii). While I am not focusing on crime, I base my analysis on this work to understand that media in general, and in particular this local newspaper, are important factors in "reproducing dominant ideologies". This reproduction, as stated by Hall, is not a "conspiracy" but rather a combination of different processes of transformation of the "raw events," which when selected, organized, framed, and composed not only become newsworthy but also form the "public idiom" of the media⁹⁴. For the case of the examined period of ZH in this chapter, I argue that the "public idiom" (or according to Hall, the newspaper's "social personality") is formed by its main position openly against the PT. Here, there are two levels of overlapping understanding: one that is ZH's political position (initially against the PT) and the other is what this newspaper (I have to say its journalists and editors) chose amongst the reality of

⁹⁴ The authors discuss these ideas extensively in chapter 3: "The social production of the news." They call media "social personality" to the combination of factors such as the "organization and technical framework" as well as the "space reserved for each event and the sense of audience" (Hall 1978: 60). All these factors are directly related to the media's audience and it is with that in mind that media built their "personality".

the city to make it newsworthy and in doing that, to reproduce a certain ideology that is explicitly against Porto Alegre's popular administration.

Zero Hora is the main newspaper in Rio Grande do Sul and in Santa Catarina⁹⁵. It is run by RBS group (*Rede Brasil Sul*), one of the six major media groups in Brazil, owned and administered by one family. Besides two other newspapers in the State, the RBS group also has twenty-four radio stations, only in Porto Alegre five FM stations - including a State network with thirteen other sub-stations - and five AMs, as well as others spread over the State. They also control the cable network in the South and part of the mobile phone business. RBS is affiliated with *Rede Globo*, Brazil's largest television network (as well as one of the biggest in the world) that has 59% percent of the national audience and is broadcasted through 99% percent of the national territory. RBS, unarguable, has the monopoly of information in South Brazil, controlling not only the news content but especially how this news is reported. The technical quality of the RBS is incontestable as they have enough technological background to produce local programs, TV films, and documentaries, as well as broadcasting news. They also have several representative channels throughout the State.

Rio Grande do Sul has two other newspapers: *Correio do Povo*, which has existed since the 19th Century but went through financial problems and thus reduced its capacity, size, and quality of the paper. The third newspaper is *Diário*

⁹⁵ In Santa Catarina the paper is called *Diário Catarinense*. However, due to the number of people from Rio Grande do Sul living in Santa Catarina, *Zero Hora* is sold out in this State. In total, the RBS group owns six newspapers, four in Rio Grande do Sul and two in Santa Catarina.

do Sul, which is also owned by *RBS* group and is only five or six years old. As small as *Correio do Povo*, it does another type of journalism, seeking popular readers and publishing sensationalist events for “C and D classes”, as they announce⁹⁶.

Although these two other newspapers exist, I would say that *RBS* controls the information in Rio Grande do Sul, either by TV, radio or the newspaper. It is useless to say the *RBS* group keeps a very close relationship with other economic and political groups, in or out of power; because the PT had a visible leftist discourse and was supported by organizations such as the MST (Landless Workers Movement) and CUT (Workers Central Union), both very strong and combative organizations in Brazil, the party was not the best choice for the majority of economic groups. The *RBS* openly campaigned against the Workers’ Party, especially after 1989, when the PT was elected for the first time for Porto Alegre’s City Hall and its first measures were considered controversial – by businessmen and local media. The criticisms became less unsympathetic after PT’s second term, when *RBS*, through its TV channels and newspapers had a better dialogue with the mayor, who is considered a more moderate candidate and whose campaign announced his wish to establish more cordial relations between the middle classes and economic elites. In the third mandate the newspaper published several articles and editorials recognizing not only PT’s popularity but also referred to it as the “phenomenon PT”. In the fourth and last mandate, Tarso Genro (2001-2004) was elected again, and the city’s financial problems along

⁹⁶ In total, *RBS* group owns six newspapers, four in Rio Grande do Sul and two in Santa Catarina.

with the considered weak performance of Olivio Dutra in the State government were used to come back to the initial criticisms. The relationships between government and local media only became friendlier in 2005 for the obvious reason that the city has a new and conservative government.

I selected and read all articles and news that *ZH* published in the period between 1989 to 2004 looking for what they were saying about the city, what they considered to be the city's problems, mentions of the City Hall and the PT, and more specifically, the PT's politics for the city. This period covers all the four terms of the PT's administration in Porto Alegre, revealing that, clearly during the first mandate, the discontentment of the newspaper due to the city's government personalized in the figure of the first mayor, Mr. Olivio Dutra. *ZH* also had very explicit and more favorable opinion of the PT's administration in the second mandate inaugurated by Mr. Tarso Genro, considered not only a more moderate *petista* and someone more open to the dialogue not only between the middle classes and the elites but also within the PT. *ZH* often reminded its readers how internally divided the PT was between the more and the less radical members and how these divisions could affect the good performance of the administrations. In the second term (Genro 1993-1996) *ZH*'s articles were less aggressive and somehow more moderate in their comments and critiques, stating satisfaction with this second mayor. In the PT's third term (1997-2000), inaugurated by Mr. Raul Pont (Genro's vice-mayor), *ZH* returned to its furious position. Raul Pont, *ZH* insisted, was a politician affiliated with the tendency of Olivio Dutra, the first mayor, then a more radical and less open mayor compared to Tarso Genro.

Finally, in the fourth mandate (2001-2004) *ZH* made clear in its news and articles that the PT was failing and declining in the city. Combined with the end of first mandate of Olivio Dutra in the State Government, *ZH*'s articles and news were already introducing the possible decline of the party in both the capital city and in the state government.

I consider the different levels of (un)cordiality in the relationships with the different mayors and their administrations as mediated not only by their political positioning but also by their class status. Genro is a lawyer and someone who the newspaper often referred to as the “theorizer” of the PT and whose image was always be in suits and ties. Dutra, besides his suits and ties is not only is a banker but someone whose appearance, accent, and style recalls a peasant man, a *missioneiro*⁹⁷, someone who supposedly does not have the sophisticated manners that, in *ZH*'s covered opinion, a governor should have. The different ways of treating different politicians was also explicit in *ZH*'s satisfaction with having Fernando Henrique Cardoso as president, since he is a sociologist that received his doctoral degree from the Sorbonne, in Paris⁹⁸.

During these four PT's terms in Porto Alegre we have different backgrounds in the national scenario. Olivio Dutra's first mandate was marked by

⁹⁷ The word *missioneiro* refers to someone who lives or comes from the missions' area, like Olivio Dutra does. He was born in a city which has in its history the presence of the Jesuit missions, in the northwest of the State, almost at the border with Argentina. That region has both agricultural and cattle raising activities, which sort of contributes to the stereotypes of a rural – and “less sophisticated” -- population.

⁹⁸ In fact, the pleasure of having an intellectual running the country was very explicit in all press media through out the country. Combined with Mr. Cardoso's pretentiousness, some journalists started to mock and to call him “the prince”, because of his arrogant attitudes, speeches and behaviors.

the beginning of the redemocratization of the country, and he was the second elected mayor after the military dictatorship. In the Federal government Mr. José Sarney, the last non-direct-elected president, transferred the government to the elected Fernando Collor de Mello, who governed from 1990 to 1992, when he resigned to avoid impeachment. His vice-president, Mr. Itamar Franco governed until 1994. Mr. Cardoso was Franco's minister of economy and introduced the new economic plan called Real Plan, which among other things created the new Brazilian currency (Real) and stabilized the inflation, besides having implemented remarkable programs of privatization. Cardoso inaugurated his presidential mandate in 1995 and governed for two terms until 2002, when Lula was elected.

When Dutra was elected for governor of the state of Rio Grande do Sul (1999-2002), Fernando Henrique Cardoso's first term (1995-1998, 1999-2002) was finishing and his presence was ostensive in interfering in the elections for state Government. The most aggressive action was an advertisement paid either for the President's party or by the local state government - allied to the federal government - and published on the cover page of the main newspapers of the country. In this propaganda the president declared the danger to national stability in electing candidates that did not follow the president's precepts. In the State of Rio Grande do Sul this advertisement was clearly against Olivio Dutra, in the face of polls' results that were announcing the probable victory of the PT for the state government. Since the ad was published on the day of the elections, the elections tribunal (T.S.E.) ordered all the newspapers to cancel their circulation so that their cover page had to be reprinted without the advertisement. The presence of the PT

in the state government apparently threatened everything that was synonymous with development and improvement. During the campaign ZH openly criticized the PT's administration in the city, making important demands but nothing different from other capital cities. Porto Alegre became, in the words and images of ZH, the worst administered capital city in Brazil, despite the international awards and, more important, the approval of the local population that reelected the popular administration for three more terms.

Despite the huge investments RBS made in technology to improve their media, the content of this newspaper can be defined as a weak, if not monothematic. The news published in these sixteen years of PT's governances seems to provide a poor account of the city's dynamics, and a very biased narrative of the Workers Party and the other parties. The newspaper also had an elitist editorial line in which it visibly expressed concepts about the city that anticipated a decontextualized space, as if it would be possible for the city to be without the problems that are part of any other city in the underdeveloped world. The newspaper published on recurrent themes, including the floods that often occurred in the city. On one hand, it is part of the unstable climate in that region: torrential storms hit and the sewer system is consequently overwhelmed. The newspaper often publishes huge aerial pictures of big avenues with cars and drivers struggling against the water. On the other hand, the newspaper also reminds readers that the streets have an accumulation of waste that clogs up the system the streets to overflow. Although it reminds people that they should be more careful and throw their trash in garbage cans, in general the rain accentuates

more the lack of care of the city by the public authorities. A rainy winter or summer also offers abundant opportunities for the newspaper to criticize the administration.

The traffic system of the capital city is another recurrent theme. Innumerable statistics, tables, descriptions, interviews, and pictures that could demonstrate points of view and particularly their suggestions were made with strong criticisms against the public administration that did not make huge investments such as viaducts or big avenues. When the popular administration decided to build a remarkable 12 km avenue across the city from North to South, all kinds of compliments were made. Named *Third Perimetral Avenue*, it was made with international funds and became evidence of the administrative capacity of the city hall in the Porto Alegre. When this avenue was almost ready for use, the newspaper published a couple of articles where in they registered the minutes spent to cross the city as a way of proving the they were right in supporting these types of work.

Finally, but not less recurrent, a third theme was concerned with what I will label the general “state” of the city, meaning the state of the streets, parks, squares, public lights, sidewalks, parking spaces, meters, cameras and/or radars, potholes, cleanliness, and other infra-structural problems. Obviously, the newspaper used these problems and associated them to crime and violence, spreading rumors and tracing connections that clearly deviated from the main point. I will explore this topic later in this chapter. These themes are only examples that I consider representative of the newspaper’s poor content. The

space given to discuss the “problem” of a pothole was in general disproportionate to the size of the problem, and the hole. The newspaper clearly used these spaces to openly criticize the administrations and to accuse them of negligence in the city, indifference to the peoples’ necessities and priorities, and indifference to the demands of the population. Although the participatory budgeting was taking place and determining the city’s budgetary priorities, the newspaper seemed to ignore that big demands had to be discussed in these meetings, and small demands such as potholes or the light that was not working, should be sent to the proper administrative offices (for example either the water, electricity, or roads departments). The newspaper knew all the rules, however, I insist, this was the strongest way that it found to expose the city’s administration to Porto Alegre’s inhabitants as well as to the whole state.

In the next session I will analyze some of the articles that I consider demonstrative of the “public image” of the newspaper, expressed in its editorial strategies that undermined the PT and at the same time reported a reality that was conveniently created as “the” important part of the social reality.

IMAGES OF A CITY THAT IS NOT THAT HAPPY: *PORTO ALEGRE* THAT IS NOT *ALEGRE* ANYMORE

Porto Alegre’s name literally means in English “happy port”. Saying that the city was not happy anymore was one strategy that the newspaper used during the PT’s first mandate in the city⁹⁹. The journalist was calling to attention how

⁹⁹ The headline was: “*As imagens de uma cidade que já não é muito alegre*”. The subtitle: *A capital gaúcha vive hoje os problemas de grande metrópole. Lixo, favelas, trânsito louco, ruas escuras e buracos desafiam a Prefeitura.*” By Elton Werb. ZH, 08/12/1990, p. 32 and 33.

“sad” the city was becoming. This headline gives the tone of the newspaper’s discontent with the city’s government, as well as what would be coming in the next four terms of the PT’s government. *ZH* made its position clear by incessantly repeating the same critiques as well as using the same “adjectives” to refer to the “state” which the city was turning into. After the PT won the elections and the first mayor inaugurated the first term (in January 1989), it seemed that Porto Alegre was starting over from scratch, as if nothing had happened before and everything that was continually happening after January 1989 was the responsibility of the PT. As if the city had neither previous history nor administrations.

The journalist starts his article recalling a “guerilla,” and his description of the city does not differ from other recurrent articles that *ZH* published at that time. Recognizing the city’s charm, “*when seen from one of its hills, Porto Alegre is a very pretty city, with its buildings spread over the river’s shore contrasting to the green islands of the delta of Jacuí* [one of the rivers that conflates into the delta]”, the journalist does not bring anything new to the style that *ZH* uses to talk about the city. Emphasizing the “rejection’s rates” of the mayor, “*in the poles, the administration’s concepts of ‘excellent’ and ‘good’ fell down from the initial 65% to 10%, while his rejection index increased from 4% to 55%*” what the article does differently is a short analysis of the immigration process from rural areas to the cities, citing it as the cause of the “*favelização*” (“slum-ization”) of urban centers. This analysis is based on interviews made with municipal technicians. Even if this article has more information than the average articles published in the

newspaper, what is consistent on it is the lack of analysis about the “*favelização*”

process and a critical position concerning causes and policies to combat it:

“The numbers of this tragedy are alarming. In the last 15 years, the number of shacks in Porto Alegre increased from 13.500 to 100 thousand. Today, there are 212 vilas without any infra-structure where 380 thousand people live. This population increased 9.8% per year, 5 times more than the global population.”

After this small differential, the journalist emphasizes the themes recurrent on the newspaper: the lack of housing and of light on the streets, the problem of waste management services, the bad conditions of the sidewalks, and the chaotic traffic. The sub-headlines say:

“There is still almost 30 thousands public light points in deficit”, “The mayor is tired of asking for [the responsible people to] taking care of the sidewalks”, “Despite that it is better, population is not satisfied with the garbage [on the streets]”, and “Chaotic traffic is making people crazy”.

These are the main themes that a first reading over *ZH*’s pages makes noticeable when talking about the city. In general, the images used to portray the city say “abandonment” followed by descriptions of “holed streets”, “dirtiness in downtown” and “neglected squares”, amongst other negative phrases. Like I said in the introduction of this chapter, these were ways of publicly attacking the “popular administration” and of demoralizing the PT’s government. I will go through some of these themes and explore some articles to show first, how these main themes in the newspaper are an attack on both the public administration and on the PT in particular, and second, how the “problems” of the city are depicted as if they were exclusively of Porto Alegre so that the public administration would be the responsible for them.

Civilização começa a chegar ao centro: Civilization arrives in downtown¹⁰⁰

As I have been pointing out, Porto Alegre was being described by the newspaper as probably the worst capital city in the country. The criticisms of the “state” of the city intertwined with critiques of the PT’s administration. Rarely an editorial or an article separated one thing from the other, even if sometimes the population and its treatment of the city were also criticized. In the article “civilization arrives in downtown”, saying that civilization is arriving downtown implies that the city is “uncivilized” and in saying it, the newspaper has its own idea about what it means to be “civilized” or an uncivilized city. The article gives special emphasis to the sidewalks that were fixed and are clean and the benches where pedestrians can sit and chat:

*“After going through some repairs and to get a new side walk [calçada] the corner of rua da Praia and Borges de Medeiros street [considered the core of downtown] became [as it was once upon a time] a meeting point of Porto Alegre citizens. Pedestrians walk more securely using the new sidewalks that now are kept cleaner. Without the flower vendors who dominated the Borges de Medeiros street, ... the area became cleaner and the new benches are now used by either friends or couples to exchange love”. **Disorder [algazarra].** The pop corn seller for 26 years ... can very well talk about the changes: ‘I almost had a couple of accidents because of the buses that used to run here. Now pedestrians can walk more calmly with no worries about the cars and cabs. ... The pop corn seller also positively points to the removal of the flower vendors: before there was too much disorder going on and it would give a very bad aspect to the street.’”*

The journalist goes on with his description of the street’s improvement to finally state that the downtown project so well approved by the population was also a partnership with the private sector, because “...the money that the city hall

¹⁰⁰ This was the headline in ZH: 05/22/1990. Cidade. P. 36. by Alexandre Bach.

has goes to the vilas, which are the areas that the city hall considers in need to be prioritized.” Here, the journalist expresses the veiled criticism of the PT – giving money to the *vilas* instead of to an area that he/the newspaper considers more important. Later, it became apparent that the positive view of the newspaper (the area became cleaner, the disorder was gone) appeared if and when the city hall developed projects in partnership either with the private sector or with the state government, almost always run by other parties. Otherwise, this satisfaction was not demonstrated.

In another occasion, *ZH* published a similar article with the following headline: “*Porto Alegre changes its face*” [Porto Alegre muda de cara]. This article followed the same lines as the previous one, with great compliments to the businessmen, owners of the stores in the area, who agreed to the financial partnership proposed by the city hall. Once more, the merit was given to the private initiative that paid the bill. In the middle of the article, the journalist says: “*by the way, the mayor Olivio Dutra was present at the event...*”, as if the whole initiative was from the businessmen and not from the city hall. The presence of the mayor became an extra fact and not his responsibility¹⁰¹.

In the previous article, Porto Alegre’s downtown is uncivilized because of the conditions of the sidewalks and because of the street businesses, like the popcorn vendor. The “disorder” is also caused by the flower vendors – the same tone will be used to refer to the vendors who sell vegetables and fruits in the downtown area in the following article that I will analyze. On the bottom of the

¹⁰¹ *ZH*, 02/21/1990 – p. 34, Cidades.

same page, what follows is an advertisement for imported equipment to clean the streets, with the headline: “let’s end the dirtiness”. I wonder if it was a coincidence having both subjects on the same page.

Following the same tendency, another article has on its headline: “*Tourism wants downtown to be clean*”¹⁰². The article argues that one of the worries of the tourism agencies concerns the street vendors [camelôs] and their “*Persian market*”. This article is more aggressive in its words; it starts by saying that “*even if the quality of the products is announced in Portuguese, the scenario was already defined by many people as a Persian Market. This is due to the typical confusion, agitation and dirtiness where the informal economy and under-work [sub-emprego] happen.*”

The article says that, “*even if it is a pretty city*” Porto Alegre is not attractive to tourists and one reason is because the city – and the downtown area – is not clean, and the “*dirtiness of the fruits and vegetables that are thrown on the streets*” is responsible. The article repeats the same words even if it also mentions the efforts of the city hall to shape the area where the street vendors sell their fruits, vegetables, and imported merchandise¹⁰³. What was interesting for me in this article is that it was calling Porto Alegre a “dirty” city when in reality any person from any other state recognizes the difference between Porto Alegre and other capital cities in terms of cleanness. For a Brazilian city, Porto Alegre’s downtown is visibly organized and a clean city, but it seems that the local

¹⁰² “Turismo quer limpeza no Centro”. *ZH*, 07/28/1990. p. 36 – Cidade. By Lauro Rutwoski.

¹⁰³ The imported merchandises come from Paraguay, the neighbor country where is the entrance door for all imported - and many times false - products such as electronic games and gadgets, liquors and perfumes, amongst others.

newspaper does not recognize it. I am positive that Porto Alegre appeared to the eyes of *ZH* more as a dirty city because it was governed by the PT.

Dirtiness was a recurrent topic in *ZH*'s articles. In the first year of the PT government (1989) the newspaper was already underlining some initiatives of the city hall to keep empty plots clean. The waste management department decided to fine the owners of these empty plots who did not keep them clean and gated. With the headline "*Porto Alegre with air of a cleaned city*"¹⁰⁴ the article goes on to give the number of how many properties were given notice of the new initiatives and how many were respecting the new regulation and ends up blaming the horse-carts' owners [*carroceiros*], "*the ones who live in the adjacent vilas*". Because many of them make some money carrying the waste that the construction managers do not want to take care of, they were the ones to be blamed.

Following the same insistent tone that called attention to the dirtiness of the city, in the first day of January 1990 – the first anniversary of the "popular administration" – *ZH* published articles underlining the abandonment of the city.

In one of them, the headline was:

*"Dirtiness takes over downtown area. It seemed an abandoned area: garbage everywhere, only a few people walking and total absence of green [areas]". And the first lines said: "The sidewalk [calçada] of the rua da praia... offered a desolating image to both Porto Alegre's population and the rare tourists that dared to go to downtown. ... Yesterday, the new scenario [that the city's administration renewed and rebuilt] was aggravated by the strike of the street sweepers. In the morning, the rua da praia was completely covered by garbage. There were papers, food leftovers, dead rats, and empty condom boxes."*¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Porto Alegre com ar de limpeza". *ZH* – 09/27/1989, p. 57, Cidade.

¹⁰⁵ "*Sujeira toma conta do Centro*". *ZH*, 01/01/1990. p. 25 – Geral. *Rua da Praia* is the way that the main street in downtown is known and it consist of a long and continuous sidewalk, closed to the traffic of cars.

In this article, the newspaper was using the reforms that the city hall had implemented (fixing the sidewalks and widening the space for pedestrians, the same ones that they complimented one month later but attributed the merits of to the private initiative) to criticize the administration of the city. The problem here, like the newspaper indicated, was the strike of sweepers which obviously ended up with the accumulation of wastes.

The following headlines said: *“Celebrations leave city desert in the New Years’ eve”* and *“Dirtiness and bad smell through out downtown”*¹⁰⁶. Both articles, mixing the population’s hang over after the New Year’s party, a national holiday, and the bad weather of the first day of the year, emphasized the presence of the garbage on the streets causing an *“image of abandonment and forsaking. An end of a party with dead rats, empty drinks cans and all sorts of garbage”*.

Finally, after one year of the first term of the “popular administration” governing the city, the newspaper published two editorials – always pretending to be impartial and to contemplate the two sides of the game. These two editorials were in my opinion unfair just because they opened the space to the PT to say something on December 31 1989, and the space to the opposition to criticize the administration was on January 1st 1990. This sequence gave the tone of what was coming in the following year. In the first article, the vice-mayor, Tarso Genro, recalled the accusations that took place during the elections and the positive results for the PT, in the last months of 1988. He remembered the conjectures:

¹⁰⁶ *“Festas deixam a cidade deserta no Ano Novo”* and *“Sujeira e mau cheiro por todo o centro”*. ZH, 01/01/1990, p. 26, Cidade.

“the forecasts pointed to the tragedy. It was said that the new popular administration, composed by socialists, would declare an open war against businessmen and this would bring chaos to the city. ... The attempts to isolate us were not a few. .. the set of data and suppositions was the perfect combination [prato feito] to bet for our failure and for the insolvent politics of the popular administration... In every single act, we have demonstrated that we constituted an austere government that relates to the whole city, treating each social segment without prejudices and yet without giving up principles. We both respected the businessmen and demanded respect for our legitimacy earned in our election.”¹⁰⁷

The article follows, listing the improvements – material and political – that the administration was implementing in the city and stating that the vice-mayor was firmly bringing both the bad forecasts and the good results. This would be the general tone of the PT in the next four terms of the popular administration in Porto Alegre, a recap of what the opposition was foreseeing as a catastrophe and what the administration was effectively doing. Moreover, the PT always had to remind the opposition that it was legally elected and a legitimate government. Peculiar in this situation between the PT and both the liberal parties and allies in Porto Alegre are the facts that their media representative – *ZH* – not only never spared negative adjectives, like any other opposition newspaper would not, and more importantly is that the city, and the state, never had any other allied medium. So, the importance of the *ZH* in divulging and shaping opinions was crucial for creating political consensus (Hall 1978a) and common sense regarding the (negativity of the) PT’s administration.

When the editorial published by the newspaper headlined: “*One discrete government year*” and even if it was not an aggressive editorial, it was severe on

¹⁰⁷ *ZH*, 12/31/1989. p. 4, Opinião. By Tarso Genro, vice-mayor of Porto Alegre.

its critics. Like its title said, the editorial referred to the first year of the PT's administration as a

*“discrete one ... that was noticeable more because of the polemic intervention on the transportation system... which did not even improve the services ... than by works that really benefited the population. ... [Porto Alegre's population] is still living in a dirty city, with bad street lights and not that long time ago had serious problems with the water services.”*¹⁰⁸

Once more, *ZH* did nothing but publish a strong opinion pushing the same buttons, the dirtiness of the streets and the lights, which I will examine in the next section.

A dark and insecure city

The title of this editorial summarizes generalized ideas about Porto Alegre and its administration, cities in general, and the concept of city and its space¹⁰⁹. The first glance at this editorial brings the association of “light” and “(in)security,” an idea that recurred almost day after day for year after year. In this editorial the newspaper traces the link between violence and insecurity, the lack of care by the administration, and its ideal city. Light, or the lack thereof on the streets is synonymous with fear in Brazilian cities and Porto Alegre would be no different. Zero Hora in debating this association, both creates the images of crime and violence and reinforces the association between the lack of light and the lack of concern by the administration for the safety of the population.

¹⁰⁸ *ZH*, 01/01/1990 – p. 02, Opinião. The “polemic intervention on the transportation system” was one of the first measures of the new government that decided to intervene on some private transportation companies, because of both the price of the tickets and the quality of the services that were being offered to the population. The fact that private property was being taken over by the government was one of the first actions that *ZH* explored as an unacceptable scandal.

¹⁰⁹ The editorial was published in *ZH*, 05/29/1990, Opinião, p. 2. “*Uma Cidade Escura e Insegura*”.

According to Susan Smith (1986: 117), “media are merely the vehicles by which the images of crime are formulated and shared”. In the case of *ZH*, in stating the forms and ways that crime should be prevented it also conceptualizes crime and its solution. For the case of Porto Alegre, *ZH* determines that the lack of light is a fact regulating criminal actions.

After living in Austin, Texas, I will never stop thinking about a cliff that separates Porto Alegre from part of the United States. It was one of the first contrasts I noted during the first nights of my first summer when I realized the residential streets did not have (in my conception “enough”) lights. I could not deny that I was surprised and could not avoid certain feelings of insecurity when observing the “lack” of lights on the streets. I was used to street lights as a symbol of security, and it was not easy for me to get used to certain neighborhoods where lights were not there. After seeing some neighborhoods in Austin, I also started to realize how different discourses and perceptions about “security” can be constructed in different places. I was surprised to know that the State of Rio Grande do Sul asked for a partnership with A.P.D. and now this department is “teaching” Rio Grande do Sul’s police about safety and crime prevention, including the use of the new electric gun called “taser”. I wonder how Austin’s police will manage what I understand as the “lack of light” and at the same time Porto Alegre’s obsession with lights in the streets.

These different conceptions about what is and what is not associated with security were also represented in the editorial in which the newspaper starts off by implicitly complimenting the state and criticizing the city’s government:

“Forced to get out from downtown after the State’s government increased the number of police officers in that area, the thieves of Porto Alegre [moved into a different area and] probably did not have too many difficulties attacking against others’ life and patrimony. What was reported yesterday in Zero Hora revealed that omission and disregard placed Porto Alegre in the condition of a dark and insecure burg¹¹⁰. There are real hunting reservations of all sorts of delinquents throughout the metropolis that submerge in obscurity, which is an eternal invitation to violence.” The editorial follows calling “dark holes” the areas that they consider are lacking lights: “close to the schools, hospitals and places where the population gets in and off [of the buses]. Even the biggest streets are becoming an underworld ...”. And it ends with a sort of recommendation: “since it could not pass the [new] street lights’ bill, the City Hall – which has not been convincing because of its progress - should at least take care of what is an elementary responsibility of any administration, and replace the bulbs that are not working.”

ZH’s perspective about the “darkness” of the city spreads a “sense of panic” and “social anxiety” (Hall 1978b et al.) after apparent stability was built. For the case of the lights and the darkness what is read on ZH is that, after the PT’s administration, the city became more dangerous because the administration did not take care of it as it should. As I have been explaining, ZH’s discourse not only erases the history of the city but also pretends that its problems began with the PT’s administration. Even when the *popular administration* made sure to announce and publicize the state of the city’s economy and any other situation that they considered a piece of heritage, it seems that the local newspaper did not consider this previous administrative history. This article follows only one that

¹¹⁰ The editorialist was referring to the article “*Darkness dominates the streets and neighborhoods*” published one day before (ZH, 05/28/1990, p. 34 – Cidade. *Escuridão toma conta de ruas e bairros*”).

was published in the previous year and that reminded the readers how the city was embedded in darkness¹¹¹.

The tone of these articles demonstrates a general discontentment about the city's administration so that a certain type of consensus was being formed around the bad experience that the city was going through. After the first resolution taken by new mayor Olivio Dutra, which was to intervene in the transportation companies as an answer to the owners that were putting pressure on the administration so they could increase the ticket prices the newspaper published an interview with the ex-secretary of public transportation at that time¹¹². The interview, entitled "*Ideology defeats technical criterion*,"¹¹³ details what this politician considered "political and ideological connotations" in the intervention, so that the reader would get the sense of how "ideological purposes" were involved in that resolution. As with many other articles published by *ZH*, its opinion does not follow what is indicated in the headline. In this case, the ex-secretary of transportation did not disagree with the intervention and rather stated that it was necessary although in his opinion it could be done differently. However, the emphasis on the main headline and on the others that followed this main article accentuated the continuation of the "problem" of the public transportation system, as well as how it was both "equivocated" and close to "public calamity".

¹¹¹ "Porto Alegre está envolta na escuridão". [*Porto Alegre is embedded in darkness*]. *ZH*, 11/23/1989. p. Cidade.

¹¹² Antonio Hohlfeldt is also a journalist and a writer and someone who ended up breaking up with the PT and becoming affiliated to the PMDB, a moderate and conservative party. He is now the vice-governor of the State of Rio Grande do Sul.

¹¹³ *ZH*, 02/14/1990, p. 33, Transporte. "A ideologia derrota os critérios técnicos".

The emphasis on how “ideological” the PT’s administration could be was a recurrent discourse in the newspaper. An editorial entitled “*The Municipal Perestroika*” caught my attention not only because of its content but also because of the use of the Russian word. I doubt that many people knew the correct meaning of the word and the consequent implications of *perestroika* in the ex-Soviet Union. Even if the word was used in the headline of the editorial that argued for the necessity of the municipal government to do its reforms, the recurrent idea in the newspaper was the emphasis on the “politicization” of the decisions and of the way the PT governed. This editorial said:

“Up to these days, the so called popular administration is noticeable for its disastrous intervention in the transportation system, for its financial penury... and for its almost total lack of work of popular interest.” ... In order for this reform [proposed by the mayor] to not be only a pre-electoral rhetoric it is necessary that all political parties that support the administration engage with the changes. In its ten years of existence, the Workers Party has been charging its opponents with austerity. Now it is the PT’s turn to give an example of its own claims”¹¹⁴.

With this editorial, *ZH* once more tried to build a consensus around the ideas that the administration was not only failing but also too close to the “communist ideology” to the point that its actions could never be disassociated from it. As if any other administration’s could.

In a final example, the columnist Paulo Sant’ana criticized the decision of the city council (the city hall had the majority of the votes of councilors since they were affiliated with the PT) that approved the closing of the commerce sector on Saturdays. The columnist used similar language to that used in the previous cited article and referred to the over-use of the “ideological” principles:

¹¹⁴ “A Perestroika Municipal”. *ZH*, 04/01/1990. p. 2, Opinião.

“...There are in this party [the PT], ideological waves intended to attack both the order and the classic values of civilized life. With this bill, they [the PT’s councilors] want to go back to primitivism, to the state of chaos that they consider ideal for the prosperity of their ideas. Some of the PT’s sectors, if they could, they would not only end the work day on Saturday afternoons, they would also end the industrial system. They would ensure they could elect their system – by all means lunatic and irrational since mankind cannot resign to its conquest.”

And the article finishes with the tragic statement from the beginning: *“this is the anticipation of the end”*¹¹⁵. This famous columnist has been working in all RBS media (TV, radio, and newspaper) for a long time. Initially a sports journalist, he always complained about everything and above of all was a fanatic for one of the local soccer teams. He is known because of complaining against his team, his style of teasing the other team, and whatever else he wanted to discuss about. *ZH* benefits from the popularity of the journalist in the RBS network, and from his polemic style, in order to organize and publicize the opinion against the popular administration. Likely, the same intention is present when it uses headlines that are disassociated from the content of the articles¹¹⁶.

Poverty and poor neighborhoods in Porto Alegre.

Unfortunately, it is an easy task to follow *ZH*’s tendencies in assessing poor people and their places in Porto Alegre. Restinga is a neighborhood 28 km from Porto Alegre’s downtown created in 1967 for inhabitants of other *vilas*

¹¹⁵ “Anticipating the end”. *ZH*, 11/05/1990. (Véspera do fim) by Paulo Sant’ana. p. 47.

¹¹⁶ For Hall (*et al.*), “headlines are frequently an accurate, if simple, guide to the themes implicit in a story which newspapers consider to represent its most ‘newsworthy’ angle.” (1978: 84) I argue that *ZH* uses headlines that do not necessarily “accurately guide” the readers through out the article but rather manipulates its headlines so that, if we read only them we can reach one opinion that does not necessarily will be the same after reading the article.

located in more central areas now considered expensive neighborhoods. The neighborhood mainly has public housing where these families were re-located. According to the city hall's data (PMPOA 2004), this neighborhood is considered one of the highest "indexes of social vulnerability" as well as one of the lowest "indexes of life conditions". Because the previous neighborhoods that Restinga's population's came from were mostly inhabited by Black population, Restinga became known as a Black neighborhood along with the all negative meanings that racist people attribute to it¹¹⁷. In talking about this neighborhood, ZH published two almost contradictory articles about it. In one of them it criticized the lack of care in the area by the City Hall, relating infra-structural problems to criminality and ideas that recall the "abandonment":

"...There is not a single person who does not have a robbery history to tell. There are no police officers on the streets and during the nights, everybody takes as much care as is possible. Insecurity is already part of the everyday life and unknown people are treated with caution. The lack of security is seen as the biggest problem of the vila. ..."

The article goes on detailing the problems of the waste on the streets as well as the lack of lights on the streets which makes the *vila* too "dark"¹¹⁸.

Not intentionally, I believe, the counterpoint to this article was published some months later and it was an exaltation of the neighborhood, as if the previous problems did not exist anymore: *"Health care stations, good schools, transportation services working well, industrial district arriving, and to end up*

¹¹⁷ The amount of Black population inhabiting Restinga made it known by different derogative nicknames as well as made it easy to be associated with "high rates" of violence in the city.

¹¹⁸ ZH, 06/10/1990. Cidade, p. 38. *"Restinga. Everyone takes care like it is possible."* (Restinga. Cada um se cuida do jeito que pode).

even better, two victories in the same carnival [conquest]”¹¹⁹. The article’s background the victory of the two schools of samba in the year’s conquest and, as usual during the military dictatorship, it used the event as a pretext to promote the positive state of politics. Although this article was published in the first year of the PT’s administration, it is surprisingly optimistic with the “state” of Restinga. It remarks on the good public services (transportation, paved streets, electricity, and water services) and, opposing the previous article, it compliments the presence of police officers around the neighborhood:

“For good or bad, there are more police officers and the City Hall is planning to build the industrial district in the neighborhood, which will end Restinga’s fame of a dormitory neighborhood. If it is not enough, Restinga is also the champion of the carnival [conquest of] 1991, twice, to complete Restinga’s folk satisfaction. For the inhabitants’ ideals, the presence of the police officers is not quite perfect, however it is better and there is already a police station. ...The new 48 buses of the Restinga [transportation company] are in general on time and do not run late like they used to.”

These two articles together are curious because first, they are published less than one year from each other and even if it is possible that the neighborhood changed within this period, it is really hard to believe that the change was that big. Besides, the fact that they are both referring to the same neighborhood although in different moments, made me think their intentions—if not exactly to change the place’s self-esteem it could be to change the city’s perception of the place.

Another way that this newspaper decided to talk about poor people and poverty is using words and images that shock the readers. A sequence of

¹¹⁹ ZH, 02/14/1991. Cidade, p. 31. “*Restinga in state of grace*”. By Erika H. Madaleno. (Restinga em Estado de Graça).

interesting articles appeared in 1991 when the newspaper was giving considerable space on its pages to talk about “misery”, not as a social problem but rather presenting sordid descriptions. As usual, the newspaper was not presenting any analysis about the situation but rather just throwing facts and evidence that I am sure the white middle classes and the elite would be appalled when reading. One article reported that a nine-month-old baby had his face and his ear partially “eaten up” [devorado] by a rat (*Rats attack baby in a vila*)¹²⁰. The article starts by underlining the place: “*one of the biggest and poorest vilas of Porto Alegre*”, and follows describing in details the poverty of this family implying that the baby had his face bit by a rat because his parents neglected him when he cried. The article starts off with “*nine-month-old baby had part of his face and ear eaten up by rats while sleeping in his shack in the vila Cruzeiro.*” The article follows, employing a dramatic description mixing poverty and fantasy about Disney’s images:

“Paulo Ricardo da Silva [the baby] could even be found with rats if his first contact with them was with the sympathetic Mickey Mouse or Jerry [Disney’s cartoon characters]. But the fantasy of the cartoons was run over by the voracity of the rats that ate up part of his face and one-third of his right ear, while he was sleeping in his miserable shack located in one filthy alley in the vila Cruzeiro. The wounds are so deep that they scared the pediatrician in the ICU of the hospital...., where the baby was brought into on Saturday....

¹²⁰ “*Ratos atacam bebê em vila*”. By Elton Werb. ZH, 11/07/1991. Geral, p. 36.



Source: ZH. p. 35. 11/07/1991.

The article gives details of the lesions and implies that it happened to the baby because of his parents' disregard:

"‘it happened around 5.30am, we were sleeping’ said the boys’ father. However, at the hospital the mother gave a different version: ‘the baby cries often and that is why he was not helped immediately’. The cry did not scare away the rat,” wrote the journalist. “The fact that Paulinho, [the baby] did not get helped immediately is not a surprise, considering the conditions in which he and his family live.”

The description of the details of this family's house is, in my opinion, unnecessary, since it satisfies only the curiosity of the middle classes who do not have contact with this reality. It neither helps the baby's family nor ameliorates

their poor conditions. It works more as a way of promoting an exotic scenario for the readers: the baby,

“was unlucky in not getting helped immediately, which is not surprising, given the living conditions of his family. Eight people (four adults and four children) share a wood shack that is 2 meters wide and around 5 meters in length. Dishes with food leftovers are spread over the kitchen and its floor which also functions as a living room. The bedroom is tiny and oppressively stuffy and the roof is so low that it is hard to stand inside of it. In the outside a pile of garbage accumulates close to the sink and the gate that separates the plot from the open sewage.”



Source: ZH. p. 35. 11/07/1991.

The article follows giving details about the family: it includes Paulo's grandmother and his uncle, his father that is jobless and his mother who,

“has four other children with different partners. The rat's attack is only one episode in Paulo's short life. He weights only 5 kilos, half of what should be normal for his age. He suffers from malnourishment aggravated

by some neurological problems that keep bringing him back to the hospital”.

On one hand the newspaper wants to bring a touch of reality to its articles, on the other hand “the reality” showed is almost a fantastic life, given the audience that reads it and the social conditions that are described as a surreal, nearly inhumane life. The article starts pointing the unfortunate reality of the baby that does not even know Mickey Mouse nor Jerry, already making a judgment about the stereotypes that he, the journalist, considers a childhood to be. The rhetoric that is used with the description about the space of the house and its surroundings reminds the reader about the “chaos” that these populations live in: confined spaces (tiny and unventilated room, one cannot stand up inside of it), food leftover on the floor, the alley is filthy, and the house is surrounded by garbage. His ways of describing the family’s members are also judgemental: the house is not only inhabited by a grandmother – which is more than common in both middle and upper class families – and an uncle, but also the woman has four other children with different fathers. These details do not add anything to the core of the article or to the problem itself.

As a compliment to this article, the day after the newspaper published an editorial called “*The face of misery*”¹²¹, explicitly referring to the baby’s face. Using the same elements that the journalist used in the first article regarding the place ([in]...*a 10 square meter cubicle – sleep eight people, four of them are children. ...no water, no electricity, and ... no hygiene conditions*”), this editorial

¹²¹ *A Face da Miséria*. ZH, Opinião. 11/08/1991. p.2

is remarkable because of not only its elaborated language, but also because of the combination of critiques, allusions, and finally, a solution. After the repetitive description of the place and the conditions in which the family lives, the editorialist proceeds in finding out who was “responsible” for the episode. After declaring that the rats were not the responsible ones since they “*are in their natural habitat, a filthy combination of garbage and open sewage*”, the editorial reaffirms that the baby’s parents were not either, because “*nobody inhabits a vila by their own wish. Likely, it would be false and demagogical to blame only the public institutions, ...even if we cannot ignore their responsibility in rationalizing social problems.*” And dramatically, the editorialist declares:

“The faultier [now being personalized by an entity or person] is called hypocrisy – an old Brazilian lady [in Portuguese it is a feminine word] – that claims all citizens have the right to procreate without giving the means to avoid them. Unfortunately, this tricky lady [Mrs. Hypocrisy] has a free pass to many different sectors of our society, including respectable institutions as well as well-educated groups of people. Her ill-fated action impedes a serious and democratic discussion about family planning, one that brings to the less auspicious classes the concept of responsible parenthood as well a discussion that inhibits children being produced like cheese, to feed rats”.

Although, an optimistic analysis of this editorial could consider it a veiled defense of reproductive rights and abortion, my interpretation is that – given the conservative position of this newspaper – it points to common sense that blames the victims. Finally, poor people are the ones who do not plan their families and who reproduce without control. Common sense reproduces and reinforces a recurrent, prejudicial, and racist discourse often used by white middle classes about poor families. Many of these white middle and upper class families

constantly complain about – and accuse with the most derogative words – poor women who “do nothing but have children”. These poor women are often maids that work as domestic servants and sometimes fail to work because of either pregnancy or to take care of their babies. Moreover, white middle classes always allude to their own “responsible” way of generating families and, conversely, the negligent way that poor families increase. In order to resonate with these discourses and ideologies ZH portrays poor people by highlighting the number of children and the number of the members of each family, since these differences are also what is going to reinforce the pretense and arrogant “superiority” of white middle classes.

The use of this “public idiom” of this newspaper, what Hall defines as the “newspaper’s own version of the language of the public to whom it is principally addressed” (1978: 61), on one hand “objectifies” the event, and on the other, explains and naturalizes not only these opinions but also poor peoples’ behaviors and realities. In choosing to be “impartial” and “objective”, the newspaper also chooses to omit and neglect historical fundamentals of poverty and historical negligence from successive governments – and not only from the PT. I, as a reader, infer that in conclusion to the editorial’s headline (The Face of Misery) we will have Mrs. Hypocrisy as the “face of misery” and the solution, I also infer, could be “massive sterilization”, a common practice in Brazilian public hospitals, and a strong element of the white middle classes’ common sense.

In another article published a few days later, ZH follows the same sensationalist trend, once more reproducing and constructing stereotypes about

poor people and the poor places where they live. The article entitled “*Kids in the island eat cardboard*”¹²² employs shocking descriptions of the islanders’ reality:

“it only takes going across the bridge to see people using cardboard in their rice soup to gorge the kids so that they will be less starving. This disgrace is similar in many family histories”. Under the subtitle “Soup of letters”, the article follows underlining the “disgraces”: “Maria, 36, ... had 12 children and carries one more in her belly... 3 children died and one is paraplegic. The husband had a surgery last month and is sick again. She picks up vegetables in the garbage and begs to get some food. ... The communion of the islanders is starvation. Arlete, 37, ... has 6 children and is pregnant with her seventh... ‘Sometimes we stay like this, sweetened water and a little other thing’ she says... Dalila, 36, shares a similar drama. Her husband has temporary jobs and the money is not enough to feed the five children. The little one, 8 months old, has bronchitis and being undernourished made him look like a one or two month old baby. ... And it was within this reality that the mothers learned how to use cardboard in their soup, so that the ones who are starving will not complain. ‘Cardboard helps, because we can’t give them a different thing, right? Kids are fuller with it.’”

This, like the case of the rat, is only one more example of how the newspaper represents poor people. The successive “abnormality” used in the descriptions of poor people’s (“tragic”) life both produces and reinforces the stereotypes already defined by middle and upper classes.

When Black people are in the news

The next selected articles are representatives of the different ways that ZH depicts Black people and, in contrast, white families. Their appearance in the newspaper was followed by pictures – and that is how we can see that one of the

¹²² “Crianças da Ilha comem papelão”. By Solano Nascimento. ZH, 11/19/2001. p.33. The Guaíba river has many islands very close to the city. The islands are part of the city and part of the Participatory Budgeting zones. The islands had been a refuge for fishermen and people who got their subsistence from the river. Nowadays, the majority of the population of these islands is *papeleiros* and other types of informal workers.

families is Afro-descendant – and even if the newspaper does not mention the racial status of these families, they reveal ZH’s unawareness of this matter. I consider that exactly because the newspaper does not mention that families who have the same job in the informal sector – both families are *papeleiros* – are in visible disadvantage in relation to each other because of their racial status, is part of the supposed “invisibility” of Black people in both Brazil’s and Rio Grande do Sul’s society. Pretending that one family is not Black while mentioning the Euro-origins of the other is at least erasing not only the Black family’s identity and reinforcing white family’s, but it is also to not acknowledge that because they are Black, their social and economic conditions are aggravated. The first article, *Misery gained a new neighborhood*¹²³ recalls a speech made by (then) Minister of Economy during Fernando Collor de Mello’s presidential term Ms. Zelia Cardoso de Mello, when she mentioned that it was characteristic of Brazilian people was to be unhappy, “*Brazilians are fond of catastrophes*”. The journalist quotes the minister but reports that “*on the contrary of what the minister thinks, these people do not complain and are not unhappy*” because they can (still) talk about their dreams. The news is about a court decision to remove people from this privately owned land.

“The 160 families that were removed from the vila Eucalipto (at Chacara da Fumaça), survive in the penury. In 6x12 meters plots, pans, clothes and food mix for four days now. ... Few of them know what the word catastrophe means. The minister also was wrong in saying that Brazilians are unhappy. Over there, people are tired and remain silent, as they wait for the installment of a bathroom During the night each man sleeps in alternate shifts, watching over their furniture and domestic appliances. Misery – Food leftovers share the same space with dogs, cats and

¹²³ “*A miséria ganhou um novo bairro*”. by Carli Rodrigues. ZH, Geral, page 38 – 03/11/1991.

chickens. Women wash their clothes in a sink in the middle of the plot. The Chacara da Fumaça has become a huge camping area. Flies fly over the misery. Under the sheets that protect from the sun, the women pick children's heads: they are looking for lice. The children are thin, have big bellies and eat only bread, rice, and beans. Yesterday, while staffs from the DEMHAB [Department of Housing] took a break from their work to eat a churrasco [barbecue] for lunch, girls and boys, mouths watering, were looking at them. ... All dwellers from Chacara da Fumaça have never known what a sewer is. **Children: the victims.** Within this desolate scene, a shack of 2 x 3 meters calls your attention: lying on a blanket, two twin boys – Rafael and Israel, 1 year and 11 months old – are covered by flies and their bones are evident through their thin skins. Many people stop by their door to look at them but nobody does anything. Nobody has money to pay a doctor nor is there a pay phone to call the social workers from the City Hall. It looks like Ethiopia, but it is Porto Alegre. Rafael and Israel have tuberculosis, says their mother, Eva ..., 30 years old, who has three more children and “carries another one in her belly”¹²⁴ does not have a husband. Regarding the pregnancy, she says that she stopped taking contraceptive pills because of her high blood pressure. She does not work. She makes some money cleaning out neighbors' houses, who are also poor. The shack does not have any domestic appliances. Eva does not have a stove to cook food for her children. The kids survive from leftovers that are given by the generosity of the neighbors. Some days, nobody eats. Some neighbors say that Eva does not have a good mental condition. Eva says that it is not true, since she demonstrates her sanity by pointing out each child's illness: the twins, besides tuberculosis, have a heart problem. The third has diabetes and the other two have worms. ‘So said the doctor’, she kept repeating. Nobody is sure whether Eva does or does not have a mental problem. Apparently she does not. And contrary to the minister's speech, she neither complains nor is unhappy. She talks about her dreams: she wants to have a stove and wants to have her tubes tied ‘in order not to put anymore children into this world’.

¹²⁴ The expression, in Portuguese, implies that she does not carry the baby in her uterus but in her bowels, which is a very derogatory statement.



Source: ZH. Geral. P. 38. 03/11/91

The above article is, like I have been arguing, one more example of how ZH reports Black people's lives. Even without mentioning that this is a Black family, the newspaper portrays its poverty with emphasis on what can be considered "abnormal" for families. In doing that, ZH constructs and reinforces processes of racialization of both people and spaces in Porto Alegre. Going through the article, there are a couple of ways in which the text contributes to the construction of a *vila* as a miserable, almost non-human place. The terms used in the detailed description evoke an image of starvation, scarcity, filthiness and disorder (flies, lice, dogs and cats combined with humans, clothes, and food, the

bodies of the children – dramatically shown in the picture – no stove, no food but leftovers, no bathroom); secondly, the place is inhabited by passive people: they wait in silence, they do not make any movement to solve their problems either of being jobless or of the twins; thirdly, they are people who do not work, since the only action described points to the “lice picking”, and inactivity can be associated with being vagabond; fourthly, the danger is always present – the men have to rotate in their surveillance; and finally, *vilas* are also a place where mentally retarded people live. What emphasizes the stereotypes is the conclusion of the article where the woman is diagnosed mentally healthy because she wants to have her tubes ligated. Similar to the previous editorial analyzed in this chapter, it links poverty with the excess of children and the necessity of establishing a “birth control program” for the poor – and Black women. Additionally, the picture of the children shown in the newspaper surely had a tremendous impact on the readers (as the picture of the baby’s face that was nibbled by the rat probably did), when overlapped with the comparison to Ethiopia. It once more reinforces Black stereotypes when it overlapped Brazil, Africa, misery and de-humanization. Finally, the indiscriminate use of the word “*vileiro*”, which is, like I demonstrated, a debasing word that is used also by people who inhabit the *vilas* to offend each other. Calling them by referring to the place where they live is to associate their condition of poverty with the (negative) condition of unprivileged people – or racializing people because of the space they inhabit. In Porto Alegre it is very common to hear the word when people want to insult others, especially when white middle class people refer to the poor.

Counterpoising this article, a couple of weeks later ZH published another article, for me remarkable by its racist position. Not exactly because it took a racist position against any Afro-Brazilian but rather because when put together with the previous one, this one is really enthusiastic about the success of the family, even in its title:

“Clean work in the middle of the garbage”¹²⁵: Eight callused hands separate newspapers, plastic bottles and cans. The sweat drains from their tired and reddened faces. The phrases in German mark the rhythm of the hard work, inside of a depository embedded in the misery of the vila Santissima Trindade. The women of the family Fischer abandoned the lixão¹²⁶ and created a working-party to separate the garbage. In order to combat poverty, the unemployment of husbands and the hunger of children, they gathered, organized and unified. The clean German descendants that colonized [the State of] Rio Grande do Sul toss the garbage and do a clean job. ... Though an unstable job, the women had to fight over the garbage with hungry animals and flies while their husbands were shifting from job to job. ‘I could not handle the smell of the trash’ said Hilda. ... Religious, the women used to go to the church at the vila. The priest and the nun motivated their organization to make of garbage picking an organized work. ... The recyclable waste began to be brought from guaranteed locals: schools, public offices and other churches. Their morale started to increase. So did their consciousness. The collective work taught the family that in order to obtain their rights they needed to be united, organized and to struggle. Nowadays, they have their own depository built with money sent from Germany. They have a school to send their children and where the other children from the vila go ...

The article continues to explain how these families exchange food and discarded things (like shoes and clothes) all found in the garbage, with other

¹²⁵ *Trabalho limpo no meio do lixo*. ZH. Geral, 03/24/1991.

¹²⁶ *Lixão* is the public waste depository, usually located in a peripheral area, far away from residences.

German-descended families that stayed in the field cultivating familiar land-farms.

In reading this article, the different treatment given to these two different families becomes evident. Again, I am not arguing that the newspaper is intentionally racist in its content. Yet, my argument is that in trying to be fair with the efforts of this German-descended family, it reinforces the stereotypes that they (the “Germans”) are “hard working” people. Conversely, in not saving any analytical space concerning why and how these families came to the city and why some made it and others, such as the first one, did not, it avoids informing the readers about these two different histories. Moreover, what attracts my attention is the fact that this type of fairness does not happen with Black families, probably because of the same stereotypes that surround them, as their depictions imply “foolishness, laziness”, and life in filthy spaces, while the language of the second article evokes “cleanness”, “organization”, “neatness”, and order, as opposed to the other previous “disordered” space.

In the second article, although their work is the same as the other families, it is called “clean work”, in contrast to the disordered descriptions of flies, lice, dogs and cats. Another point concerns the obvious advantages that this German family had in relation to Afro-descendant families, since no government from Africa will send financial help to them in the Diaspora. The paper pays tribute to the sacrifice of the German family and shows in detail how the sacrifices can be compensated – despite German financial help. Finally, in this article, contrar to the previous one, people are not vagabonds and do not wait for anybody: they do

it by themselves and the compensations come. In the same way, the association with church and religion nearly becomes a divine intervention.

When the conversation is about the city. Visions of Porto Alegre and its space.

While asking myself about how the newspaper would describe, perceive, and depict its perspective on the urban space, I found that this newspaper's position was one that in fact expects the city to follow a "first world city" model and for that end it encouraged the city hall to expend considerable amounts of money on big constructions and works that would have visual impact. Even if the newspaper was a big critic of the increasing poverty, its position becomes clearer when analyzing articles related to different points of the city that were not *vilas* or less privileged spaces, like the downtown, for example. I will start by scrutinizing how and what *Zero Hora* conceives of Porto Alegre's space, how it visualizes and foresees the city as it must, in the newspaper's opinion, be like.

The newspaper had a very clear position regarding how the city would become a modern one and it seems that it would start by encouraging the use of cars within the city. Porto Alegre has the features of mostly Brazilian cities with a clear central area where businesses such as banks, public offices, and such as the State government, the city council, the state congressional house, and the city hall, are all located. Downtown also has a strong commerce, in addition to different restaurants, bars, and cafes that serve the population that either works or goes to downtown to use the services or business. All this concentration makes downtown a busy area into which daily converges a reasonably big part of the population. Besides the official business, the population also has to deal with the informal city

in downtown, meaning street vendors, beggars and homeless people, and *papeleiros*, who go downtown for the obvious reason that the commerce throws out a good amount of paper, mainly cardboard. Besides that most of the buses routes go to downtown, that area is also very busy with taxis, micro-buses, and private and public cars that circulate around downtown. These factors make that central area a crowded place, if not the most crowded place of the city during the day.

One theme that was recurrent in ZH was the constant mention of traffic jams in certain avenues and areas of the city, which the newspaper had no clemency in criticizing. In reading it, I was impressed with the number of detailed articles about how bad the traffic system was in the city, as well as innumerable editorials and columns about the topic. And in criticizing it, *Zero Hora* was demonstrating its defense for a wide and fast traffic system. The editorial “*Finally some big works*¹²⁷” praises the announcement of the *Third Perimetral Avenue*, the famous 12 km avenue that links the North to the South of the city:

“The mayor Tarso Genro will announce this month a plan that promises to release the traffic of Porto Alegre. Within the announced public works there are viaducts and other passages. It is getting too late. Up to now, the city’s administration concentrated its efforts in duplicating some streets and changing the direction of the others. These strategies reveal an incomprehensible lack of vision. After the Real Plan the number of cars that circulates in the city increased by 30 thousand new vehicles. It is this increment that in part determines the phenomenon that added to the life of the majority of Porto Alegrenses [inhabitants of Porto Alegre] a big annoyance. It has to do with formidable traffic jams that multiply in critical spots of the city, stealing time and patience of the citizens as well as wasting fuel with high environmental expenses. ... Finally, it is going to change. Besides the short term measures... the municipality hopes to get

¹²⁷ *Finalmente obras de porte*. ZH, Editorial. p. 20, 05/01/1995.

international funding to implement the Third Perimetral Avenue, ... which is going to cost US\$ 120 million. That is the type of project that will certainly get the support of the whole population already for so many years orphan of big road works ... It is time for the biggest metropolis in the South of the country to think big."¹²⁸

This editorial, like others that were published in different version but for a long time in the newspaper, praises the initiative of the “big public project” for the increasing number of cars circulating in the city. I thought about the population that lives in the Entry of the City and other areas like this, and how – or if - they would praise this amount of cars. Not that they are not drivers in the city but yes that surely they have different priorities, which the PT was trying to respond after the OP. I also noticed that with the increasing amount of cars – and the criticism concerning the traffic jams – horse carts driven by the *papeleiros* were more and more attacked in the newspaper. Many editorials wanted to banish them and in fact different measures were implemented – such as requiring registration and plates for the carts so that they could be identified and fined in case of disturbing the traffic - to organize their circulation in the city. While the PT’s administrations were investing in other infra-structure projects in the periphery, works that were visible only to the poor since the white middle and

¹²⁸ Almost two years later, ZH published a very similar editorial, stating the “precariousness” of transit system in the city, which “*in the last 8 years* [exactly the time that the PT was governing] *has not received one single work for improving the transit system*”, and the cause of the “*precariousness is only one: a lack of foresight of the administration*”. The final arguments were also the same: unnecessary waste of fuel, environment, and human trouble. ZH, Editorial. 12/07/1996. p. 18.

upper classes do not go to these areas, the newspaper was demanding new roads projects so that they finally got it¹²⁹.

In the same line of the previous editorial, another column that is worthy of note was published almost one year after and not only was an open defense of the use of cars in the city, but also provided both personal and official arguments to convince that the city should be transformed to facilitate cars to move around. Entitled “*Solutions for the transit*”¹³⁰ the columnist Paulo Sant’ana’s article explained first that he observed the traffic jams had increased in Porto Alegre: the reasons, for him, “... are only two: the omission in building public traffic works and a ‘boom’ in the number of cars. It is easy to notice it even in Zero Hora’s parking lot. ... Workers that before did not have car just bought one.” The columnist was referring to the stabilization of the currency and the inflation, after the Real plan implemented by then minister of the economy F.H. Cardoso. He follows giving examples, sometimes racist, of places where he sees more cars circulating or struggling for a parking spot:

“Everywhere there is an increasing automobile wave. The little and [so called] popular cars have massive acceptance and we see incredible scenes in the city: another day I went to one of the local schools of samba and I only saw negão [big black man] driving their cars and carrying their cell phones everywhere. I mean, automobiles are now more popular. ... I am sick of seeing big traffic jams everywhere while the buses are empty. Buses only get full when it is the rush hours, early morning and evenings. How is it then that the transit gets congested at anytime? It is obvious that the crux of the matter is the cars. ... Having said that, if I was the next city

¹²⁹ An example of an editorial about the horse carts published in January, 1993. The columnist that will praise the acquisition of new cars and the defense of new public works like “viaducts”, analyzing the successive victories of the PT declared that the party was winning because of the small works of the PT in the peripheries, “small but give votes” (*A pré-monição*, by Paulo Sant’ana. ZH, 02/14/2000. p. 55).

¹³⁰ *Solução para o Trânsito*, by Paulo Sant’ana. ZH, 04/16/1996.

mayor, besides a big viaduct that I would build in the area from ... to ... Avenue, besides the high passageway on Ipiranga Avenue and others, ... I would not doubt in declaring a 'state of emergency in the transit', so that the cars could circulate only 11 out of the 22 work days of each month, measure that was already adopted in many other international cities. ...".

Ten days later ZH published the results of a survey made in the capital cities in Brazil revealing the concerns of the voters that would elect the new city mayors, in October of the same year¹³¹. The article starts off with *"Porto Alegre is the capital city that most valorizes honesty as the required quality for a mayor candidate to be elected. It is also the city where the traffic problems are the biggest concern of the population. ..."*. However, when the tables of the results of the surveys were displaced, the list of problems that most concerned the population appeared in this order: first, public health system, second safety, and third, traffic. Not only did the newspaper tell what it considered to be more important about the data – public health and security were weakened -- and it expressed its opinion as if it were the public opinion. Because ZH's readers surely also drive cars and are therefore disturbed by the traffic jams, the newspaper uses its opinion to both create and reproduce common senses about the problems of the city. Or, as said by Hall (*et al.*) it "takes the public's voice, it becomes the people's 'ventriloquist.'". (1978: 75).

There was another remarkable editorial in which ZH, a propos of the city's 227th anniversary, undertook the "voice of people" to state what they were in need of. Years after the first popular administration, ZH had not stopped to "report" to

¹³¹ "Eleitores cobram honestidade dos candidatos". [*Voters claim for the candidates to be honest*]. ZH. Política. 04/26/1996.

the readers that the three successive governments had not yet reached its excellence. The editorial acknowledges some positive values, with objections:

“The idea of unveiling Porto Alegre to the Porto-Alegrenses restores the love for the city and stimulates the population to work even more to give to more human quality to the metropolis which is already considered the city with the best quality of life in the country. Despite the national acknowledgement of its [good?] administration ... these honors cannot hide the deficiencies of the city, nor create the illusion that all problems are reasonably resolved. ...The porto-alegrenses aspire to more than their daily life offers: they want, for example, a better transportation system, better public health care, more leisure options and better tourism structures. The city and its inhabitants have, above of all, reasons to dream of their metropolis becoming like the biggest capital cities in the world [later the editorial cites as examples Barcelona and Paris]. Since we conquered a minimum pattern of public administration, Porto Alegre is waiting for its big strategic plan...”¹³².

This editorial, corresponding to what Hall (*et al.*) named as the construction (by the media) of a *consensual view* of the society, as it “carries the assumption that we all have roughly the same *interests* in the society, and that we all have an equal share of power in the society” (1978: 55). What is appealing for me in this editorial is the assumption about what “the Porto-Alegrenses” want or need, as if after ten years (the editorial was published in 1999, the PT was elected in 1989) the population was still “waiting” for ZH to voice what we needed.

Likely, a second opinion would refer to the same ambitions pointed out in this previous editorial, to think about the city. Then ex-mayor of Porto Alegre, Tarso Genro wrote the article “*The modern city*” and ZH published it on its column called *Opinion*. With variations in words, arguments, and focus, the ex-mayor expressed what the different *popular administrations* envisage for Porto

¹³² “A Capital e o futuro”. [*The Capital city and the future*]. Editoriais. 03/21/1999. p. 18.

Alegre, and it was different from what the editorial was saying, although it focused on the same “internationalization of the city” model. Even if he was not openly talking to the newspaper, the ex-mayor was firm in its critics to the opposition. Mr. Genro’s article “*The modern city*” starts off affirming that

“the accumulated experience of Porto Alegre’s city hall allows it, in the next few years, to make the city an international model in three different levels. These are levels that, even within the anarchical and cruel globalization promoted by the international capital, give prominence to the city as a place of both resistance and progress, as a place of democracy, and a place of technology and progress. It is obvious that such a project – even if limited by the lack of a national project – could only be based on three successive local governments that appreciate a new type of citizenship, expressed by the Participatory Budgeting [OP], ...with the noticeable process of income redistribution In order for a big city to be truly modern, it has to be a worldly city [uma cidade mundial]. It has to be understood within an international system of relationships ..., it requires the local and its specificities to be unfolded, so that the difference will be utilized as both economic and political forces. The Participatory Budgeting is one of the elements that have built these differences and have displayed Porto Alegre to the world. ...”

The article follows giving examples of “*cities that are globally important*” like Los Angeles, Barcelona, and Heidelberg, using the last two as examples of democratic efforts to socially integrate all population strata and Los Angeles as a city that “*made its urban organization an instrument of ghetto-ization of the poor populations*”. The ex-mayor explains in his article that: “[T]his *integration* [that happens in Barcelona, Heidelberg and (implicitly in) Porto Alegre] *is realized either through specific forms of community participation or by technological mediations that allow the citizens to ‘invade’ the State and to control it as its first receiver.*” The article ends up emphasizing the attention that in...

“a political dispute in the city, what is an authoritarian and excluding view of the neoliberal elites of the right wings, in the peripheral countries

corresponds to a backward elite that injures the State, and uses a detrimental language against any democratic evolution: especially against the ones that yields capacity for decisions to the common citizens, the ones that are only remembered [by these elite] in electoral periods”¹³³.

I do consider that at first this editorial was a refined answer to the innumerable critiques made by others—conservative—views of governing and organizing a city. Although I do not overestimate it, I consider this had (or should have) a significant impact not only on the newspaper’s editors, but also on the paper’s readers since it was written by Mr. Genro, probably the only “easy to handle” politician of the PT, in *ZH*’s opinion. Secondly, although the ex-mayor was not directly addressing the newspaper, he was aware that the opinions expressed in it were—often not subtly—against the PT’s way of administrating the city. In critically addressing the elitist and conservative views of the city, Mr. Genro once more made clear the PT’s position stating that if this view could be negative for the paper it would have to discuss with the system that made Porto Alegre “a worldly” city, the Participatory Budgeting.

The concept of the city that *ZH* reveals through its “public idiom” (Hall 1978: 61) became more apparent in another editorial published in 1995, when Mr. Genro was running the PT’s second term and his first mandate as mayor, and when, I understand, the OP was becoming better consolidated and more well known in Porto Alegre. It was already disparaging in its title and implied that the city was going more through disarrangement than through organizing. The editorial was written by an architect so that it was given the necessary authority in

¹³³ “*A Cidade Moderna*.” [The Modern City]. Opinião. 09/10/1999.

the discussion. It was completed with big examples of architecture such as those completed by Haussmann, the baron, and Eiffel, as well as writers like Victor Hugo, Zola and André Maurois, “*who sung those [Paris’] boulevards and squares, ... [all places] both erudite and understandable even to the more rustic of the walkers.*” The wish expressed in this editorial was elitist and the critic classist¹³⁴.

The editorial was scholarly teaching the readers that
“*a brand new process of urban thinking was invented in Porto Alegre. The topic is not professional anymore. The mayor convokes the indistinct population to ‘interfere in the city’ without any payment. Gathering in endless and contingent soirees, the indefinite crowd takes anonymous decisions. Up to the present, it was thought that... cities’ plans obeyed a plan that had an author. In the most spontaneous spatial organizations, it is possible to see an authorial intervention of a thought that organizes, foresees, and imposes a direction: the principle of an organizational order.*”

The author follows his arguments, sometimes with confused archeological, anthropological, and historical arguments, demonstrating that any urban space followed a plan of some author. He continues linking a natural process of conformity of urban spaces to a single and talented authority:

“*If Haussmann, the baron that planned Paris, had convoked an assembly to define what would be the plan to reform the capital, he would have lost his job. He would probably be fired because for incompetence. ... Maybe it is because in France, people like Haussmann are subjugated to the Republic. In the American Civilization, ... in industrial cities like Chicago, are shown one of the best didactics about how to plan cities. We owe to cities like these the introduction of the community representatives that would meet with the planners. ... This would be a way of guaranteeing the preeminence of the technique over both the executive and legislative preeminence For French people, ... the mayor’s authority is subjugated to the President, when concerning urbanism. Look to the works of Mitterand, for example. In this, it is patent that [these works] are*

¹³⁴ *Plano diretor ou dispersor?* [City ordinance or dispersive plan?] by Luiz Carlos da Cunha. ZH, Editorial. 06/07/1995. p. 23.

obsessed with excellence and grandiosity, both compatible with their history, even if he [Mitterrand] hired foreign professionals. These are famous names of international architecture and urbanism who do not submit themselves to public contests. In France, since urbanism is considered a topic of national relevance it will never be performed by half-time public servants, neither it will be decided in popular assemblies nor consumed by endless and dilettante discourses. This is a serious topic. The responsible authorities work for the city ordinance, they do not agitate around a [new] dispersive ordinance.”

What is a conquest to the PT and was expressed in Genro’s opinion, appears on this editorial as an intricate and backward experience, almost a backwards example of politics. The fact that the author refers to Paris as the model in these editorials is not new to the readers, what can be, I claim, effective for public opinion is the dismissive way of talking about the OP’s system and the fact that with this system people were taking decisions about their own budget. Besides the fact that elitist discourses and ideologies consider poor people incapable of administering their own life – remember the case of the “passive families” in the *Chácara da Fumaça*, picking lice and other (in)activities – they probably consider a confrontation as giving them the power to make decisions about the city. The ironic reference that the OP’s assemblies are “soirees” – in which no one is a writer or an intellectual -- exemplifies the hostility towards poor people. Additionally, the editorialist is at least misinformed about the organization of the OP, since it does not create any new ordinance for the city but rather, based on the already existing city ordinance it decides how to spend the public money and what the priorities are in each zone of the city.

Finally, the way that the editorialist speaks is at the minimum arrogant, like many others quoted in this section. This attitude is nothing less than the

reproduction of the bourgeois common sense that, again, is implicit in the editorial style of *ZH* both because of and in empathy with its audience. Dreaming about Paris and Baron Haussmann as models for the city implies a utopia that completely overlooks the history of the country. What the newspaper does not praise, I argue, is the fact that all mayors did not get tired of commenting, exhibiting, and talking about the successive acknowledgments of both international institutions like the U.N. and its H.D.I. (Human Development Index) and other rates divulged by federal bureaus such as PNUD/IBGE (census) that labeled the city as one of the best capital cities in Brazil. However, *ZH* performs like the PT's super-ego when it even acknowledges – publishing this news in its articles – it has to declare its disapproval and dissatisfaction with the way of the PT governing. The potential city, in *ZH*'s opinion is definitely not the one that the PT was doing. Again, *ZH* presents a counter-action to the city, when does neither recognize the advances of the PT in the administration nor recognizes the PT as an improvement for poor people's life. When addressing poor people, *ZH* is only one more agent that produces and reinforces the racialization of poor and Black people in the city.

Final Remarks: Spatial Dispersions

While I was finishing this dissertation I received a very excited e-mail message from my friend Bira, of the Black movement in Porto Alegre that said more or less this: President Lula signed up the bill that declared the area of the family Silva an area of “social interest”, meaning that from now on, that area can neither be sold, nor claimed. The area now **is** officially an urban quilombo recognized by the Federal Government and there is nothing else to be done but to keep the family living there. While I congratulated my friend, the Silvas and the Black movement for the victory, I asked him what else was going to happen. He told me that there are already projects to build the urban infrastructure that will benefit the family’s living conditions. This decision taken by President Lula, three days before the second round of the elections that re-elected him for the presidential office, made me think that there is hope. Inevitably, however, it also makes me think about the role of the PT in managing urban land rights issues, Black people rights as well as urbanization processes in Brazil.

Departing from the PT’s experience in Porto Alegre that I presented in this work through the Entry of the City Program, in these concluding remarks I would like to present some reflections about my work itself as well as to open it for further research. Here, I intend to refer to three central points that I consider to be implicit in my dissertation and that I want to underline. Firstly, I want to think about how the Brazilian left, in this work represented by the experience of the PT in Porto Alegre, understands and deals with racial themes in Brazil. Secondly, I want to point how Porto Alegre’s experience speaks to general issues of race in

Brazil. And thirdly, I want to address my position within the Brazilian social sciences and how I tried throughout this work to build a dialogue with the Brazilian academia.

THE LEFT AND THE POLITICS OF RACE IN BRAZIL

A first point that I would like to present concerns the politics of race carried out by the left in Brazil. One conclusive remark about this politics is that the PT in Porto Alegre did not have a consistent politics that faced the inequalities of Black people in the city. This is, I argue, not because the PT did not want to, but rather because the PT has been incapable of seeing racial inequalities as such. And it has been incapable to acknowledge racial inequalities because embedded in the national ideology that it is part of the national common sense. The PT, less than other parties but still strongly embedded in the effects and results of the racial democracy ideology – now already revised - demonstrated its own limitations to acknowledge racial struggles as belonging to the racial sphere; and rather, it understood those struggles as belonging to the class sphere.

I also have to recognize that part of the Black movement is strong and active inside of the PT and this means that the Black movement sees the PT as an alternative where racial struggles can be debated and resolved. This is what partially happened in Porto Alegre and somehow the Black movement had a positive answer from the party - in both Federal and partially in local level - for the case of the family Silva. With this, my partial conclusion regarding the position of the PT regarding racial struggles in Porto Alegre is that it is marked by several factors, and specifically discussed in this work it was strongly marked by

the space where the struggles were occurring. For that reason, the PT partially did recognize struggles like the Silvas as a racial struggle because of the evident presence and pressure of the Black movement in that struggle and fortunately President Lula responded favorably to it.

I have to underline that November 20th is celebrated the National Day of the Black Consciousness in Brazil, a date that was proposed by Black activists from Porto Alegre and nationally accepted by the Black movement¹³⁵. Porto Alegre, under the PT administration was the first city in the country to declare municipal holiday, followed by other two hundred cities. Unfortunately, the businessmen and industrial organizations considered the holiday unworthy for their business and a judicial order cancelled the holiday. The city hall still under the PT's administration kept the holiday in its services, but the new administration cancelled it. This shows a active movement of the PT pro-racial struggles. Contradictorily, I also remind the readers the words of the coordinator of the first meeting in the Housing Department that I attended in Porto Alegre. That person said that what I was looking for (racial issues), I was not going to find in the Entry of the City and even less in the housing department, unless I would go to specific places where the racial position was "declared" through evident symbols: a t-shirt that stated "100% Black" or in places where capoeira was being played as evidence of "cultural racial marker". This incapacity of acknowledging race

¹³⁵ 20th of November of 1694 is the date that the historiography points as the day that the Black hero Zumbi, the leader of the quilombo of Palmares (ca. 1590-1694) was killed. These activists from Porto Alegre, unsatisfied with the official 13th of May (1888), the day when the document that abolished the slavery was signed up, decided that Zumbi was the representative of the Black struggle rather than the official document, which in fact did nothing against racial inequalities and injustices.

where is not “clearly” stated as such is in my opinion related to the history of denying race as the most important element that defines social inequalities and injustices in Brazil.

What the experience of Porto Alegre tells about race in Brazil

With this said, I would like to go to my second point of these concluding remarks that concerns to how and what the experience of Porto Alegre tells us about race in Brazil, which is related to the meaning of being Black in Porto Alegre. I hope in this work I demonstrated Porto Alegre’s singularity in the national and international scenario. The capital city of “second whitest” state in Brazil not only has a significant Black population but it also has a strong and active Black movement, including several Black women’s organizations. Past and current researches about “Black culture” and people in Brazil have argued about the singularity with which blackness is constructed in Brazil. Mainly, it has been a dialogue that comes from Brazil to the United States and from here back to Brazil, endlessly trying to define, among other singularities, whether in Brazil there is or not the same racial understanding as in the United States. Besides the fact that this dialogue sometimes sounds to me like a monologue because they seem to be explaining themselves to themselves, I would like to propose a perspective that engages to this conversation from the very local perspective, like I did here departing from Porto Alegre.

My argument is that the sense of blackness in Porto Alegre, like in any other place and history, while constantly being formed and transformed, is also based on a structural foundation. Therefore, and again like in any other situation,

it is a dynamic process of reinvention. The particularity of the meaning of being Black in Porto Alegre is deeply rooted in the local history of European immigration that was primordially due to the politics of whitening of the country. That is why Black spaces in the city were ironically named for “African colony” (Colônia Africana), and this identification, like any other identity, was relational: as a counterpoint to the Italian and German colonies in the State. In this sense, the nomenclature that is used in Porto Alegre for Black people is the same that it is used in the rest of the country: *negrão*, *negrona*, *negrinha/o*, *pretinha/o*, *moreno/a*, *moreninho/moreninha* (big Black guy and/or woman, little Black guy and/or woman, dark skin man/woman) and the different “color” identifications are, in my opinion only variants of the same (racial) theme.

For that reason, in Porto Alegre and in the rest of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, everybody is seen as “belonging” to and having ancestors that are in relation to European, as well as native and African background. And these ancestors are identified as being *alemão*, *gringo/italiano*, ‘*bugre*’ and ‘*pêlo duro*’ (“German”, “gringo” - Italian descent -, ‘bugre’ can be pejorative and it is also the way that indigenous descendants are referred to, and ‘pêlo duro’ that literally means ‘hard hair’, and it is used for people who are Portuguese descendants). These are probably not the only classifications, but I want to call the attention to the fact that they are talking about roots and location, belongingness and space in the world and the fact that they are racial classifications. Although these nomenclatures are used from both sides, what I understand is that what is named are two poles in the racial world: African descendant people usually refer to the

“others” recalling their (other) origins (German and gringo) which is also accompanied by an evident color/racial position when these references are used as offenses (branco azedo/branquela, *sour white*, for example). Conversely, Euro-descendants refer to Black people recalling their color and racial status. Thus, if there is some truth to the fact that not all African descendent people recognize as such, I would say that Blackness in Porto Alegre is recalled less when talking about oneself but rather in contrast to the “others” (Euro-descendant). Although I also think that no Black person ever questioned his/her Blackness simply because the outside racist environment has already marked this person as a Black one, identity here is marked by contrasting oneself to others. Therefore, I argue that Blackness in Porto Alegre, in addition to the subjective and individual experience of being Black, it is strongly marked by the “others”, the non-Black people, who somehow function as contrast to the Black experience.

What the experience of Porto Alegre tells about race in Brazil is that, on one hand being Black in Porto Alegre has its particularity such as the way that Blackness is constructed and presented, like I demonstrated here. On the other hand, this particularity only makes being Black in Porto Alegre one more way of living through racism and racialization processes the same processes that occur in Brazil as well as in the African Diaspora as whole. With this said, I also emphasize my position in this work, in which I tried to understand Porto Alegre’s experience within the African Diaspora framework. African Diaspora, again, understood from its three components. The first two refers to Diaspora as 1) a theoretical tool that I used to understand the reality of those Black families, as a

well as 2) their lived experiences. As a theoretical tool, it allowed me to connect those families to the bigger African Diaspora reality - including the United States - in various aspects. Fundamentally, it concerns to experience the same unequal positions in relation to other non-Black populations. Thirdly, African Diaspora implies also a political project that the different sectors of the black movements for always have been already tracing, mapping and developing. This political project encounters both resistance and allies. The governments of the PT in Porto Alegre, in now in Brazilian Federal government, have oscillating between being more and less engaged and committed to these struggles. It is left to the Black movement and different Black organizations to go ahead and to struggle for the rights of Black population, without waiting for the PT – or any other institution that is not openly committed to the Black struggles – to reach a better response for their antiracism struggle.

Black people in Brazilian urban spaces Social Sciences

In this third point I am also trying to build a dialogue with Brazilian's, and because of my location right now, with United States' scholars regarding the discussion of race in Brazil. One point that the Brazilian academia has some difficulty to acknowledge is the history of Porto Alegre as a place deeply rooted in the history of slavery in Brazil as well as the history of Black people in that city. This blindness to the Black presence in the city, I argue in this work, is due to several factors that overlap and affect each other. First it is due to the local ideology and identity that is constructed and represented as a “European region” in Brazil. I understand that, like other places are also seen as “the” presence of

Africa in Brazil because of several factors like demography and commercial matters, South Brazil is as well seen as the “whitest” states also because of demographic and commercial factors that present that region as a place where tourists can find “Europe in Brazil”.

Additionally, I consider that Social Sciences (both Brazilian and foreign researchers) played a very important role – if not decisive – in determining which part of the country was/is more representative of Blackness in Brazil. For long generations Brazilian social sciences saw a concentration of (mainly cultural) studies about Black people in other regions, mainly in the North, Northeast, and latter in the Southeast. In the South, I would say that social sciences had left some empty spaces. In the fifties the anthropologist Herskovitz went there and wrote a couple of pieces about African religions in Brazil, mentioning the strong presence of these in Porto Alegre. He was followed by two other local psychiatrists who wrote pieces about the phenomenon of trance. In the sixties, the French anthropologist Roger Bastide wrote no more than five pages (out of five hundred in total) on his book entitled “The African religions of Brazil: toward a Sociology of the interpenetration of civilizations”, published first in French (1967) and then in Portuguese (1971). In the seventies another local anthropologist wrote his master’s thesis about the Afro-Brazilian religions in Porto Alegre and only twenty years later (1990s) writers of my own generation, including myself, dedicated five pieces of our master’s thesis to the presence of Afro-Brazilians in Porto Alegre and in the south of Brazil. After that, the number of studies about Afro-Brazilians in the south Brazil increased and, fortunately, has also varied both thematically

and methodologically. Thus, the concentration of studies on one or two areas of Brazil and the lack of the same attention to the South also propagated those other regions as more “authentic” and truly “African”.

Finally, I also consider that the general lack of studies on more politicized issues of Black population – urban segregation, for example – in Brazilian social sciences is again related to the same blindness that I have been mentioning in these last remarks. This is, I consider, a sort of more subjective matter that has objective implications. It is always interesting to see how in Brazil – and in the South of Brazil more intensively – politicizing the discussion about race can sound as dangerous and threatening to the “harmony” of the country. Although in the present moment scholars have been arguing and expressing their opinions pro and against affirmative actions in both academic world and in the newspapers, the predominant positions have been against these politics because of several reasons, from which I underline the (apprehensive) possibility of “bringing something external to us”, meaning “importing” from the United States the bi-racial classification as well as its politics and solutions. Even when these scholars (foreign and nationals) argue that Black population is the most affected by social inequalities, it is hard for them to agree that specific politics – and not universal ones - have to be carried in order to combat these inequalities. Thus, the fact that these are debates which are not easy to carry because it would sound like “anti-natural” to the nation, is another (subjective) reason that I tried to face in my work, and to break up with the continuous blindness and avoidance of them.

Questions for further research

While writing this dissertation I was taking notes of points and questions that I was not debating, but at the same time that I was thinking as was opening them for future research. In a very local level, I thought that my work could continue to examine how far the Entry of the City program is improving the lives of the Black families. I am not sure how far the Entry of the City program is changing the structural cycle of poverty and inequality that affects Black families in that area. My fieldwork showed that Euro-descendant families were benefiting more positively from the Program because of their structural advantages, which was not happening with Black families. My question and concern is related to how far Black families will improve their life in a longer term and after the Program is concluded. I have in my memory a question that I heard one day in one of the meetings in the Entry of the City, coming from one of the residents: “ok, but do I have to work with trash for the rest of my life?” This question – about the possibility of changing of labor, changing of activity - is something that the PT did foresee but could not answer effectively. And in my opinion it did not because the party was not able to see the racial specificities and disparities in that area. In another words, the PT was not able to see those people as anybody else but papeleiros. That is, the PT, because of its incapacity of liberating itself from the historical racial blindness, was not able to address specific issues that affect Black families not only in Brazil, but in Porto Alegre in particular.

I also argued in this work about racialization of people and their spaces. I consider that a further question to be answered goes in the same lines of the first

one, but will have to think about the capacity of Brazilian society in general to accept and to incorporate the discussion about racial inequalities and the (mis)use of all negative stereotypes about that population. Something similar was already done with Black students who entered to the universities through affirmative actions, and the results showed that those students in fact – and against the “theories” that argued that these students would have lower scores and more difficulties in their college careers – they are having either the same scores if not higher ones than students who did not enter through affirmative actions. I think that this type of study could also be carried with these communities to investigate who is and who is not benefiting from and who will improve their lives when affected by specific politics against racism and the consequent racial stereotypes.

By this I mean, for example, how would be these families after the implementation of politics that would move them out of the cycle of being *papeleiros*? How would it be, for the future generations, if they could follow new careers as lawyers, doctors, teachers, or computer engineering? How would it be for the city of Porto Alegre when dealing with Black judges and lawyers, Black doctors, teachers and computer engineering? How would be the configuration of the space if these families were able to move out from the Entry of the City and to be in different spaces – back to Mont Serrat, for example?

Finally, I also think in terms of the Diaspora I consider that an interesting research topic could be carried in comparative terms, like I had in mind in my initial Ph.D. project. I would ask how other cities, like Bogotá, in Colombia, for example (that also implemented the participatory budgeting system based in Porto

Alegre's experience) are resolving or not these same issues faced by Black people? What does it mean, in terms of the third world cities, to face urban segregation of Black communities and how – and if – they are resolving it? Also, how these racialization processes occur in these different places (South America and Africa, for example) and how are they faced and resolved? These would be questions that I would pursue as my next step.

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